THE

# MAN OF FORTUNE,

AND

## OTHER TALES.

BY MRS. GORE,

AUTHORESS OF 'GREVILLE,'—'LOVER AND THE HUSBAND,' &c. &c.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL I.

PHILADELPHIA:
LEA & BLANCHARD.
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# THE MAN OF FORTUNE.

## CHAPTER I.

"For solitude to virtue proves a grave;
A sepulchre in which the living lie,
Till all good qualities grow sick and die."
COWPER.

SIR GILES CRESSINGHAM, in his youth a spendthrift and a roue, had become in his age something almost amounting to a miser. Not merely as regarded money;—nay, according to general interpretation, not as regarded money at all; for he was liberal in his house keeping, and scrupulous that his old family mansion at Stoke Paddocks should exhibit all the state, if not all the hospitality, which it displayed under the dominion of his ancestors.

But the old gentleman was chary of his conversation, chary of his affections; miserly with his mind, miserly with his heart. The hollowness of the world, the superficiality of mankind, had inspired him with general mistrust, by the influence of egotism, creating a complete egotist.

"They never cared much for me," mused Sir Giles, "when I was young, cheerful, and good-looking. How can they be attached to me now that I am old, infirm, and peevish? No, no! their civilities are addressed to my strong box. My relations pay their court to me only because they want to figure in my will. We shall see, we shall see!—In the meantime, I shall take care that they do not figure at Stoke Paddocks."

The fine old gardens of the place were consequently

kept up for the recreation of the chaffinches and sparrows. It was only occasionally, on a very serene July afternoon, that the old gentleman could bear his Bath chair to be rolled out upon the lawn, to be stationed under a drooping beech-tree; under which he enjoyed precisely the same reveries he would have enjoyed by the fire-side. As a youth, Sir Giles had been remarkable for his shyness,—as a man, for his absence of mind;—and now, in his decrepitude, cold, proud, selfish abstraction had taken place of all other faculties. His feeble spirit, within the intrenchments of an equally feeble body, was keeping up a perpetual warfare and defiance against the mass of mankind. He was always on his guard against them; always inwardly intent upon the unobserved discomfiture of their stratagems and manœuvres.

Surrounded by venerable servants, whose life had been a system of deference, as *his* of despotism, a perpetual Ko-too waited upon his nod.—There was no hope of his extending his sphere of virtue or enjoyment.—There was no one to suggest that so rich a man as Sir Giles might be wiser or happier. When he issued his decrees, his household obeyed in breathless submission. A simultaneous bow actuated the whole brigade whenever he was pleased to express an opinion. It was clear enough to others besides the vicar of the parish, that it would be easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for such a man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

It is probable that had the splendid property of Sir Giles Cressingham been entailed, a vast difference would have been operated in his character. As a life enjoyment, he would have prized his fortune only as he prized the food that ministered to his hunger, or the garments that preserved him from the cold. But absolute power creates the absolute prince. To dispose of Stoke Paddocks and his other fine estates after his death, had been the grand consideration of his life—the great object of his reveries under the beech-tree and by the fire-side. Had it formed an agreeable object, this would not have signified. But unluckily it was a source of pain and anguish to the narrow-minded Sir Giles. In addition to the usual jealousy of his successor, he

was disturbed by peculiar misgivings and antipathies in his choice.

His nearest relatives were cousins, the sons of uncles who had tormented him with advice and interference in his youth. He hated the whole pack of them. They were the Master Goodchilds who had been set up as examples to his boyhood. Of their children he knew nothing, he wished to know nothing, chiefly because their injudicious parents were always tormenting him with letters concerning their merits and proficiencies; insulting him with a sight of their copy-books, their themes, their school-prizes, and college distinctions. Sir Giles resented all this, less as a legacy trap than as a personal insult, intending to twit him with his folly in having refrained from matrimony; and his destitution, in his having no son of his own to write Latin exercises, and take honors at the University.

By degrees his dislike assumed the morbid virulence of animosity. He could keep his troublesome relations out of his house, by ceasing to invite them. But even *his* absolutism was unavailing against the intrusions of the post. They could write to him when they pleased; and write they did, with a pertinacity that seemed expressly intended to harass and annoy. As he never answered them, he was in hopes that his dogged silence would in the end wear out their perseverance. By no means!—They only wrote the more, to inquire why he never wrote. At length in his feverish irritation, he ceased to open their letters. He was familiar with their several hand-writings. He had an intuitive perception of a cousinly letter, by the very manner of its folding; and there was a large drawer in his old-fashioned secretaire, to which, for the last ten years, he had consigned every note and epistle that bore evidence of emanating from any branch or offset of the family of Cressingham. He almost allowed himself to rejoice on the arrival of one of these family missives, written on black-edged paper, and closed with a mourning seal.

Meanwhile, the last will and testament remained unengrossed, and the lands and tenements of Stoke Paddocks undevised. Sir Giles Cressingham appeared to conceive, that, by evading the question of inheritance, he might baulk his inheritors;—thus, though the most absolute of men,

waiving his own right of disposal over his property, in favor of that of the law! It is recorded of one of the proudest of modern aristocrats, that when the approach of death was announced to him by his physicians, he caused his carriage to be ordered, went out airing, and died on the road, as if from a sort of vague conviction that the King of Terrors might be conquered, by defiance, that it was possible to be "not at home" to Death!—In the same spirit Sir Giles appeared to imagine that the non-appointment of an heir secured him from a successor to his property.

There were moments, however, when announcements in the newspapers of the decease of his contemporaries, seemed to shake his nerves and excite his anxieties, by reminding him that even so rich a man was merely mortal. At such periods, his reveries under the beach-tree became, if not of a more sorrowful, of a more sullen complexion. He seemed to grudge the succeeding generation, manifested through the vista opened by those insolent obituaries, their enjoyment of the verdant lawns and noble woods around him. Every year added something to the beauties of Stoke. Money did much, and nature more, to enhance the glories of the scenery. The timber grew more majestic; fresh springs, bursting into the lake, perfected its margin; and rare exotics were added to the conservatory, and finer fruits to the garden, by the operation of horticultural art. It was only the master of all these enjoyments who was declining; it was only Sir Giles who found himself the worse for the lapse of succeeding years.

Whenever all this occurred to him, he could have found it in his heart to exterminate every cousin of them all. As a last effusion of malice, he would have adopted some low-born stranger, in order to disappoint his expectant kith and kin, had his household dependency presented any youthful scion certain to survive him. But the abject slavishness to which he reduced those connected with him, had prevented all idea of matrimony from entering even his steward's room. His old housekeeper was a spinster, and his butler a gay bachelor of sixty-two. The whole establishment was as lonely, selfish, and discontented as himself.

It happened that one morning, in the midst of one of these fits of gloomy moroseness on the part of the old man,

his peculiar appetite for the perusal of that grievous department of newspaper intelligence, headed "ACCIDENTS AND OFFENCES," brought under his notice the affliction of a widow lady of the name of Blair, whose only child, a boy about four years of age, had fallen out of a window, to the endangerment of life and limb. Mrs. Blair (it appeared from the paragraph in the 'Courier' which described the sad event) resided at Reading; and Sir Giles, remembering that the seat of his cousin Richard Cressingham, whose only daughter had run away with a Captain Blair, was situated within a mile of that town, had reason to suppose that a real family affliction had overtaken one of the objects of his antipathy.

In the listlessness of his leisure, he even opened the drawer containing the denounced Cressinghamian epistles; and having selected those which bore the postmark of "READING," proceeded carelessly to break the seal, anxious to ascertain for a certainty that Richard Cressingham was visited by misfortune.

His amiable solicitude was rewarded. The letters in question, a hoard conglomerating for the last six years, contained the whole history of his kinsman's domestic vexations; first, in the refusal of his only daughter to give her hand to his near neighbour and friend, the Earl of Ashleigh; secondly, in her elopement with a penniless captain in the Guards; and, thirdly, in the death of the bridegroom within a year of the marriage, leaving an infant son to his portionless widow. Had Sir Giles previously conjectured for a moment that the correspondence of his aspiring cousin conveyed intelligence of so many personal mortifications, the letters would not have been allowed to remain so long unopened!

"I have resolved, and I have communicated my resolutions to Sophia," said Mr. Cressingham's last letter, "never to receive her again into my house, unless she consent to remit the child to his father's relations;—who, it appears, are willing to burthen themselves by its adoption. To a childless widow, twenty years of age, it is far from improbable that Lord Ashleigh might be tempted to renew his addresses. At present, she remains as obstinately attached to the child as she was to its father. But I am not without

hope that the severe distress to which she is reduced, will eventually prevail over her obstinacy. Purely to annoy me (though she pretends to talk about attachment to the scenes and friends of her youth,) Mrs. Blair has thought fit to take up her abode in lodgings at Reading. But as you may suppose, my dear sir, this does not accelerate, by a single step, her reception under my roof, except upon the terms I have proposed to her acceptance."

"Unnatural brute!" was the ejaculation of one of the least amiable of the human race, at the conclusion of his cousin's letter. "I always detested Dick Cressingham, even more than his brother. Had it not pleased God to remove the child, it should be all the better for its grandfather's disgusting inhumanity."

It was so long since the old man's feelings had been touched by anything beyond the limit of the park-palings of Stoke Paddocks, that he could not forbear reverting again and again to the subject, till he began to interest himself seriously in the fortunes of Mrs. Blair and her boy. He reconsulted the ACCIDENTS AND OFFENCES, and even the obituary of the Courier, for further intelligence concerning the unfortunate child; and at length worked himself up into such a state of nervous excitement, as to resolve upon despatching one of his grey-headed confidentials secretly to Reading, to ascertain the sequel of the event. It was only a journey of forty miles. A journey of forty miles was nothing for the chance of an opportunity of thwarting Richard Cressingham.

The old butler, to whom absence from Stoke was an event as rare and almost as exhilarating as tidings of family mischance to his master, returned in a couple of days so cheered and gratified by his journey, that all he had seen and all he could imagine of the widow Blair and her offspring, was painted in the most glowing colours. The relief he had experienced in emancipation from the thraldom of his tyrant, was attributed to admiration of so fine an example of maternal devotion and patient resignation, as the lovely Mrs. Blair; and of the promising little Reginald, of whom the newspapers had exaggerated the danger, but of whom it was impossible to exaggerate the spirit and beauty. Old Matthews vowed he had never beheld so fine a little fellow.

He even added certain arabesque touches to the picture as to the resemblance borne by little Reginald to one of the ancestral portraits of the Cressingham family, in which a likeness had always been found, by his flatterers, for their present representative.

"It was very prettily thought of in Mrs. Blair, to name her son after her great grandfather, Cressingham!" muttered Sir Giles, who, but for the idea that this selection on the part of the young widow was probably most unacceptable to her father, would certainly have liked the boy the less for so presumptuous a manifestation of his family connexion.—"'Reginald Blair!' why not 'Reginald Cressingham?'—nothing would be easier than to effect the change of name, if I should find, hereafter, that the old fool Matthews has not bamboozled me by his account of these people."

The first step taken by the old man towards the verification of his butler's statements, was to fit up, with simple elegance, a small house situated on the outskirts of his park, which, in the time of his father, Sir Reginald, had been the residence of a favourite sister. By the beginning of summer, The Wilderness presented the very type of "a cottage of gentility;" and already the scheme so far prospered, that the interest excited in his mind by the progress of improving and furnishing, had considerably abated the habitual hypochondriacism of the peevish Sir Giles. Every day, he proceeded in his garden chair, at a snail's pace, from the Hall to The Wilderness, to ascertain that the new carpets were put down and the gravel walks properly rolled; and by the time the butler was despatched a second time to Reading, no longer incognito, but as bearer of authentic credentials and harbinger of the family coach and four that was to arrive the following day, Sir Giles Cressingham was at least ten years younger in health and temper than he had been ten weeks before.

## CHAPTER II.

"He gave him, first, his breeding;
Then showered his bounties on him like the hours
That open-handed, sit upon the clouds,
And press the liberality of heaven
Down to the laps of thankful men."

BEN JONSON.

LET it not be inferred that, because the cousinly epistle conveyed by Sir Giles Cressingham's butler to Mrs. Blair, drew tears from the eyes of the widow, it contained the remotest allusion to his projects for the benefit of little Reginald. The prudent baronet, anxious to judge for himself of the dispositions of both mother and child, simply expressed his regret that, in the period of distress following the untimedecease of her husband, she had not made known her troubles to one so nearly connected with her as himself; and proposed that she should spend a month or two at Stoke Paddocks, by way of change of air for the little invalid.

The tears of Mrs. Blair were produced by the bitter reflection that, had the letter addressed by her early in her widowhood to Sir Giles, not asking pecuniary aid—of that she was incapable—but imploring his intercession with her father, reached its destination, she might perhaps have been spared the sufferings of three years of sorrow and destitution. It was impossible for her to guess that, so far from missing its destination, that very letter lay unopened among fifty others, in a drawer of the old man's secretaire; or that, even if the touching appeal had met his eye, not all the eloquence of all the best epistolary authorities in Europe, would have induced him to address a syllable of conciliation to his cousin Dick.

Gratefully, meanwhile, did she accept the baronet's friendly invitation to Stoke. Change of air had in truth been ordered for the boy, who was slowly recovering from the effects of his accident; and it touched her to the soul that while, in her cruel visitations, her own father had not deigned to testify the slightest sympathy, though constantly passing the door of her humble lodging, a kinsman, comparatively a stranger, should exhibit such generous compassion towards the little sufferer. Sir Giles's invitation

came with a double grace that it seemed more especially directed to her child.

Mrs. Blair, severely humbled by the bitter woes of adversity, was more overpowered than gratified by the demonstrations of respect with which the head of the house of Cressingham chose to dignify her removal to his family seat. It was his pleasure that Richard Cressingham should hear of the family coach and outriders filling the narrow back street inhabited by the widow, with the glare of their liveries; but it was far from *hers* that her poorer neighbours should be dazzled by a spectacle of such undue magnificence. Even the little boy was more amazed than delighted by the multitude of strange faces that clustered round him by way of escort to his new abode.

That new abode appeared, however, an earthly paradise both to the mother and her child. Poverty is never more oppressive than when endured in the confinement of a town. The infancy of little Reginald had been spent in a close lodging-house, the abode of poor Sophia's old nurse, who officiated as their only servant; and to possess a garden of his own,—a garden where he might play or work at his own good pleasure,—a garden full of flowers and fruit,—a garden where the sun shone and the birds sang,—was happiness enough for the boy!

His mother's enjoyments at The Wilderness were of a still higher order. Books and musical instruments awaited her there,—*her*, so long estranged from the habits of refinement derived from birth and education. While the boy wondered in silence that his mother should weep to find herself proprietress of an elegant drawing-room, lavishly adorned with the minor luxuries of life, he little thought she was grieving anew for his father, as on the day of his death.—It was precisely in such a house she had indulged the girlish dream of passing her life in the society of Harry Blair! And they had been fated to spend only a few needy harrassed months together,—persecuted by the animosity of those who called themselves their friends!

It was surprising how complete a regeneration of nature, was wrought in old Sir Giles by the concoction of the first project of his long life not exclusively relating to himself. As some gnarled and twisted old thorn-tree sends forth

leaves and blossoms in the sunshine, he had found taste, he had almost found poetry, in his soul, for the embellishment of a home destined to the enjoyment of youth and beauty. In that fair widowed cousin and her young child, he beheld objects so differing from himself, that he seemed to understand the necessity of providing pleasures for them utterly foreign to *his* powers of enjoyment; and had taken pains and pride in the prodigality of his arrangements for their comfort.

All the money, all the time, all the thought, however, which he bestowed upon these preparations, were a thousand fold repaid by the pleasure derived from their arrival. They were the first living things, both young and beautiful, that, for many years past, had embellished the desolation of Stoke Paddocks;—and the old man and all his inmates regarded them with something of the admiration due to celestial beings.

The child, more especially, became an object of idolatry in the house. All his little expressions were cited as wonderful,—all his movements noted as admirable. He was a plaything to the second childhood of the old people,—an idol for their worship. No son and heir was ever more devoutly welcomed in a childless house! Toys, pets,—a pony,—a miniature gun, were provided for him; and when he only ran impetuously across the lawn of The Wilderness to greet Sir Giles, or sported carelessly upon the banks of the lake, the hitherto listless baronet became convulsed with alarm lest any evil should betide the lovely boy.

"You should be more careful with him, madam;—you ought to observe stricter discipline with him, my dear Mrs. Blair,"—he would peevishly exclaim to the tender mother. "After the great peril to which he has been already exposed by want of proper vigilance, you cannot be too much on your guard."

At the expiration of the two months specified for their sojourn at Stoke, instead of sanctioning their departure, Sir Giles Cressingham made a formal proposition to Mrs. Blair to abandon her residence at Reading, and adopt The Wilderness as her future home; and if he did not at present more distinctly allude to his intentions in favour of Reginald it was only because he was now becoming sufficiently ac-

quainted with Sophia's peculiar delicacy of mind, to fear that mistaken notions of duty towards her father might determine her to refrain from unduly promoting the interests of her son at the expense of those who had nearer claims upon the property.

Even at the close of a year, even at the close of two, Sir Giles had not committed himself by positive engagements. Already he exercised over Mrs. Blair the sort of quiet tyranny which made slaves of all depending upon him.—Though far from anticipating, or even desiring, the adoption of the child to the exclusion of the lawful heir, the fortunes of the portionless boy were solely dependent on the caprice of his wealthy kinsman, and she was consequently patient under his fractious tyranny. Her father's resentments were redoubled by the favour shown her at Stoke. Other members of the Cressingham family were yet more bitter and even scandalous in their interpretations. But she bore their animadversions without repining. The boy was so well, so happy, so beloved at Stoke, and so averse to seek for affection and kindness elsewhere, that it scarcely needed an exercise of philosophy to enable her to submit unmurmuring to the injustice of the world.

At length, three years after her establishment in Buckinghamshire, Lord Ashleigh, as if roused to a new sense of her attractions on finding them appreciated elsewhere, renewed by letter his proposals of marriage. But they were declined without a moment's hesitation by Mrs. Blair. No need to address a word upon the subject to Sir Giles Cressingham. She wanted no advice—she wanted no encouragement; all it required was, to express in courteous terms her positive disinclination to become Countess of Ashleigh.

About a week after dispatching her letter, she began to notice that her cousin's daily visits were discontinued; and fearing that the old gentleman might be indisposed, she hastened to the Hall, which, except at the dinner-hour on Sundays, or by special invitation, she seldom entered. She soon found that he was not ill,—that he was only angry. On learning her renewed rejection of his friend the earl, her father had addressed a most indignant letter of remonstrance to the baronet; and Sir Giles, who no longer threw

into his rubbish drawer the letters bearing the Reading postmark, and was eager to vent upon some third person his rage at being reprimanded by Dick Cressingham,—now addressed a furious apostrophe to poor, patient Mrs. Blair. He reproached her as bitterly for her ingratitude, in not having referred herself to his opinion in a crisis so nearly involving her welfare, as he could have done had she accepted the propositions of Lord Ashleigh, and quitted The Wilderness to become his wife. Nay, certain of his expressions were so humiliating, and so nearly approached a menace of dismissal from his favour, that Sophia, whose spirit was for the first time roused by his harshness, took the opportunity of their quarrel to announce a long-promised visit to a friend at East Bourne, and was off with Reginald on the following day for the coast.

Had this proceeding been a matter of policy instead of instinct, it could not have been more adroitly planned to bring the old gentleman to reason. After four-and-twenty hours' separation from the child and its mother, he began to discover how ill he could dispense with their presence. All the sunshine of his life was lost! Again and again did he write to implore their return. He talked of illness—he became indisposed in right earnest; and threatened them with immediate dissolution unless the mother and son placed themselves instantly in the carriage which he dispatched once more to bring them home in ceremony to the hall.

The poor mother dared not persist in her refusal. She only stipulated that, since Reginald was to become a sort of state prisoner at Stoke Paddocks, proper care should be taken of his education; and as he was now more than seven years old, in addition to the pony and gun, a tutor and masters were provided for his use.

Rendered desperate by the impertinent suggestions of his cousin Richard, Sir Giles now spoke openly of the boy as his future heir. Though he never expressly announced it to Mrs. Blair, it became known, through the indiscretion of his man of business, that a will in favour of young Reginald had been signed and sealed. Already, the servants treated him with the deference due to their future master; and already his relations spoke of him with the contempt due to their successful rival; and he was toadied by the depen-

dents of the family, and flattered by the country neighbours, as heir to one of the noblest estates in the country.

There was no need to toady, no need to flatter him. The boy's dispositions were as conciliating as his personal charms were remarkable. He was handsome enough for an heir apparent, even to a throne. His mother often grieved to note the false indulgence and pernicious adulation surrounding him; not only as fatal to the character of the future master of Stoke Paddocks, but because nothing could be more uncertain than his hold upon the affections of the capricious old man. A fit of peevishness or conscientiousness, to attacks of both which seizures old age is peculiarly liable, might at any moment determine him to fling his will into the fire, and allow the estates to devolve upon the heir at law. Reginald was still too young to be apprised of the nature of his position. All she could do in the way of palliative was to make him as good and reasonable as she could.

But the virtues and wisdom of eight years old, more especially when possessed of a gun, a pony, and a tutor required by his employer to teach the Latin grammar upon his knees, are not much to be relied on. Reginald grew a little flighty, a little imperious. It was only towards his gentle yet often reproving mother, that he maintained the docility of his natural character. With the old baronet, above all, he became an absolute tyrant. Consciousness of power is a dangerous latitude for children and numskulls; and the boy of eight became a despot precisely on the same instigations as his cousin at eighty. He was perfectly aware that, if dismissed from the drawing-room in disgrace, Sir Giles could so little live without him, that, penitent or impenitent, he should be summoned back again, even sooner than he wished to come.

Mrs. Blair, though by no means a woman of extended intelligence, became at length painfully alive to these perils and dangers; her perceptions being singularly quickened by the officious advice of Dr. Chaffles, the Vicar of Stoke. Chaffles was a well-intentioned man, who, aware that his mission in this world was that of a counsellor, was as fond of interposing his wisdom in the temporal as the spiritual concerns of his parishioners. Without courage, however,

to exercise his functions on the leader of his flock, to whom he manifested all the blind devotion due to a patron saint, he consoled himself by besetting the fair lady of The Wilderness with assurances that her boy would be irretrievably spoiled by the weak indulgence of his patron, and her own reputation irrevocably injured by her equivocal position at The Wilderness.

For some time Mrs. Blair replied to the latter insinuation with a smile;—the sullen decrepitude of Sir Giles vindicating his character as a seducer, as completely as her own depressed condition with respect to him, her own as a sultana. But by degrees the bitter drop insinuated day by day into her portion, acquired strength; and in the solitude of her isolated life, she assigned some importance to the insinuation of the vicar. She began to fancy herself slighted in the neighborhood. She grew nervous whenever some accidental visit placed her in the presence of strangers. Dr. Chaffles's object was attained. He had produced an impression, and a very disagreeable one it was!

The tactics of poor Mrs. Blair, whose destiny it seemed to be ever the victim of persecution, were not of a very comprehensive nature. Again, as before, she betook herself to her friend at East Bourne; and again Sir Giles, on finding the shutters of The Wilderness closed, and the nose of Reginald's pony thrust inquiringly over the gate of the meadow, as if wearying for the return of its young master, pronounced himself to be the worst used of mankind.

Just as the great despot of Versailles, on the retirement of Louise de la Valliere to the convent of Chaillot, dispatched a noble confidant with his equipages and sign-manual to bring her back to his arms, did the despot of Stoke now expedite old Matthews a second time to the Sussex coast. But the fair Sophia, like the lovely Louise, was inflexible. She had promised, she said, to spend a month with her friends, and afford Reginald the advantage of sea-bathing, and must adhere to her engagement.

On the return of his messenger and his family coach unsuccessful, the baronet became as furious as Roland the brave. He spent three sullen hours under his favorite beech tree—an alternative to which he had not been reduced since the tenancy of The Wilderness. An evil spirit had entered into

him,as into Saul of yore,which there was no soothing harpist to dislodge. For several consecutive days, did he grumble and growl ;—chiding the servants, cuffing his favorite dog, which, paralyzed like himself, was laid every day at the foot of his Bath chair to endure his caprices ; and enacting the ejectment of tenants and the prosecution of trespassers and defaulters. Three disastrous law-suits, which afterward tended to impoverish his successors, had their rise in the ressolutions of those days of contrariety.

On the fourth, Dr. Chaffles called in, *un*called for ; and, almost for the first time, tendered advice to his patron nearly as uncalled for as his visit ; assuring him, in the strictest confidence, that the feelings of Mrs. Blair had long been severely hurt by the equivocal position of her son, and the slights produced towards her in society by her very questionable situation at The Wilderness.

Sir Giles stared with amazement ; first, at the gratuitous loquacity of his vicar, who, saving in the pulpit, was scarcely held entitled to speak in his presence, unless when spoken to ; and secondly, at a suggestion which his most discursive flights of fancy had never conjectured. *He* endangered a lady's reputation—*he* ?—It was not till he had mused three hours more under the beech tree,that the astonished old gentleman had exhausted the various gradations of surprise, horror, indignation, mirth, and satisfaction, arising from so preposterous a notion.

The *last* sentiment, as was not unusual with him, retained the ascendancy. The poor infirm octogenarian chuckled inwardly at the notion of being considered dangerous. Danger implied attraction. It was clear that many persons still supposed him capable of charming a lady's eye. In the midst of his yellow flannels, he drew up his crippled form with a smile of terrible exultation.

Recollecting that he had cut short the eloquence of Dr. Chaffles, without giving time for the counsels which were to have followed his exposition, he sent a messenger to the vicarage, requesting the pleasure of his company,with a view to the termination of his gratuitous discourse. It occurred to him,and he was not mistaken, that the church would suggest reparation of his wrongs. It also presented itself to his mind, that Dr. Chaffles would constitute a more dignified ambassador ex-

traordinary than old Matthews, to bear to his cousin, Richard Cressingham's daughter, the extraordinary proposition, purporting to convert the widow into a wife, on the sole temptation of becoming a widow again! even Sir Giles being perfectly aware that a jointure constituted the sole palliative to the innumerable disagreeables of the match.

No one who has not lived in a state of subjection to a person of bad temper and ignoble mind, can surmise the strength of aversion generated by such a position!—Mrs. Blair disliked the tyrant of Stoke as much as she was capable of disliking any human being;—and the mere notion of his aspiring to fill the place of Reginald's father, converted her distaste into loathing.—Still, the interests of her son demanded that her negative should be phrased in measured terms. Sir Giles offered, in the event of receiving her hand, to make a formal adoption of her son, and confer on him, by act of parliament, his name and arms; while on the other hand, though not absolutely expressed in his letter, it was pretty clear that her refusal would exile both child and mother from Stoke Paddocks for ever more. Dr. Chaffles hinted as much while offering his strenuous advice that she should smile upon the suit of which he was the special pleader.

But there was a duty to be performed to the dead as well as the living; and Mrs. Blair would not hear of compromising a sentiment so sacred as that which bound her to the memory of her lamented husband. She refused;—gratefully,—respectfully,—but in words so decided as to leave to Sir Giles Cressingham not the slightest hope of her relenting in his favor.

"You will repent it, madam; you will repent it the longest day you have to live!" cried the vicar, on receiving her letter, and an intimation of its contents. "Sir Giles Cressingham, of Stoke Paddocks, forty-seven thousand a year, thirty of which within a ring fence,—is a man not to be trifled with! A wilful woman must have her way; but I beg leave confidentially to assure you that I would not be in your place, my dear madame, or in that of your son!"

If the truth must be told, the vicar did not at that moment consider his *own* particularly inviting. It was on *his* devoted head that the wrath of the baronet, on perusing the

mortifying document, was likely to fall; and in spite of his cloth, he was almost as little able to evade the explosion of his patron's indignation, as the poor, paralytic Chole, trembling at his feet!

But even Dr. Chaffles, versed as he was in the intemperate egotism of the old man, had not prepared himself for the violent outburst of passion with which Mrs. Blair's rejection was received. The vindictiveness of Shakspeare's Richard was not more ferocious. It was the first serious disappointment Sir Giles had received in the course of eighty years' experience! Happy, or rather unhappy man!—such an impunity tending cheifly to prove the narrowness of the sphere of his affections.

Furious at having been betrayed into a step productive of such deep humiliation; conscious that, but for the injudicious interference of his pastor, he should as soon have thought of applying to government for a mitre as to a pretty young woman of six-and-twenty for her hand; the old man indulged in such wild and wanton upbraidings as drove even the subservient Chaffles out of his house. The day was by no means a pleasant one for those who had no alternative but to remain under the same roof with the proudest of proud men, who found himself for the first time set at nought.

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## CHAPTER III.

"I will be sudden,
And she shall know Love, in extreme abused,
Knows no degree of hate!"

MASSINGER.

THE following day, Athanasius Docket, the man of business who had executed the former will of the baronet, was summoned anew to Stoke Paddocks. The instructions issued to him were secret and confidential as they were peremptory; and *this* time, he dared not open his lips to friend or foe touching the testamentary intentions of his patron.

On his departure, the mind of Sir Giles appeared considerably relieved. It was summer time. He caused himself

to be rolled out once more upon the lawn; and was guilty even of a grim smile as he mused under the beech tree, satisfied that the work of vengeance was in progress! He indulged in no further demonstrations of irritabillity. He attempted no overt tokens of displeasure against the lady of The Wilderness, but brooded over his malicious projects as silently as the assassin brews his cup of poisons; waiting in patience like the whirlwind of the poet,

Which, hushed in grim repose, expects its evening prey.

Docket had assured him that a week would be requisite for the preparation of the deeds, and precisely to that stretch of time did he extend his provision of patience.

An old man tottering on the brink of the grave, yet concocting projects of earthly vengeance, is always a terrible spectacle; still more so when, like a rattlesnake coiled in the midst of some smiling and flowery Savannah, we find him surrounded by the most lavish gifts of nature,—the best blessings of Providence. There, under the spreading tree of his own fair lawn, sat the man who for eighty years had enjoyed a superabundance of the good things of this world, —its marrow and fatness,—its purple and fine linen;— for which he had never experienced one grateful emotion,— one thankful thought; for *he* believed them to proceed less from the vouchsafing of providence than from his own inherent right and title as representative of the Cressinghams of Stoke Paddocks.

And now, it was also as the representative of the Cressinghams of Stoke Paddocks that he was about to revenge himself upon one who had presumed to suppose that his feebleness of mind and body, his unsightly aspect, his wearisome companionship, were an inadequte exchange for the sacrifice of her youth and self-respect. The good gifts which had inspired him with no feelings of gratitude, conveyed at least facilities for working evil; and he was resolved that the contumacy of the fond mother should be punished with a refinement of malignity worthy the devising of a grand inquisitor.

He counted the days, he counted the hours. He dispatched messenger after messenger to Docket's office for

re-assurances of his punctuality; and in the interim, consigned to that tomb of all the Cressinghams, the fatal drawer of the secretaire, a letter bearing the East Bourne postmark, and Dr. Chaffles to Coventry. He waited. He took pleasure in waiting. Anticipation seemed to prolong the pleasures of vengeance.

At length the happy day approached; and had it been appointed for his bridal, he could not have hailed it with a warmer welcome. Already he had written to Mrs. Blair,—written to her for the last time; not in a strain of upbraiding, but in friendly and complacent terms, as if acquiescing in the wisdom of her decision; begging that the past might be obliterated from her memory, and soliciting her return to The Wilderness on the 25th of June, about a week sooner than the time originally fixed: arrangements nearly regarding the future welfare of her son, rendering it desirable that she should be present to witness the execution of some famly papers.

Enchanted to find the old man thus benign and lenient, poor Sophia almost reproached herself for the dryness of the terms in which she had conveyed her rejection. She assured him of her ready compliance with his wish;—and on the evening of the 24th, drove into the gates of The Wilderness with exemplary punctuality. Dazzled by the variegated hues of its gay flower-beds fragrant at that moment, with thousands of mid summer roses, she almost wondered how she had found courage to renounce the favored spot so long, for the arid environs of the sea. At the door, she found a message from Sir Giles, pleading indisposition, and requesting her to defer her visit to the Hall till the morrow at one o'clock;—a delay affording no small relief to her terrors, which were powerfully excited by the prospect of their first meeting.

Next day she felt re-assured. She had rested after her journey. Her heart was cheered by the joyous prattle of the boy exulting in all the pleasures of home,—all the raptures of rejoining the pony and Dash, the keepers and old nurse Adams, after three week's separation; and taking him fondly by the hand, she proceeded on foot to the Hall.

A midsummer day in a fine old English park is a glorious thing. The deer taking refuge under the shade of its ma-

jestic avenues,—the song of birds bursting from the thickets,—the hum of insects vivifying the pastures enamelled by a thousand wild flowers—impart a tone of gladness and population even to its solitudes. Mrs. Blair had never felt more alive to the beauties of Stoke, than now when enhanced by the monotony of the South Downs; just as the elegance of her cheerful home acquired a new charm in her eyes from the discomfort of the country parsonage in which she had been a guest. She felt doubly grateful to Sir Giles Cressingham that she had such a home to return to.

As they traversed a narrow path at the head of the lake, within a few hundred yards of the old mansion-house, a pair of swans, ancient sovereigns of the waters, sailed majestically toward them, descrying their benefactor Reginald, and hoping to be fed.

"Everything and everybody knows and loves me here, mother!"—cried the happy child. "Never let us leave Stoke again;—I have not a moment's pleasure when we are away from Stoke!"—

On entering the drawing-room, Mrs. Blair was startled to perceive preparations for some extraordinary ceremonial, the gilded armchairs, covered with Gobelins tapestry, were moved from the wall to form a circle round a table; at the head of which was placed a reading-desk, and a salver containing a decanter of water and a single glass, evidently intended for the refreshment of the reader. But before Mrs. Blair had leisure to indulge in surmises, the turret clock struck the appointed hour; when the door of the drawing-room, leading from the suite of inner apartments, was thrown open, and in came a solemn procession, headed by old Matthews, preceding, in guise of chamberlain, the arm chair of his august master, rolled by two footmen into the room.

Agitated by a thousand disagreeable anticipations, Mrs. Blair hastened towards him; little suspecting that, great as was *her* emotion, the inward perturbation of the old man was a thousand times more overpowering. Every pulse in his attenuated frame was throbbing with rage and hatred, at sight of the only living being who had dared openly to avow that personal distaste which hundreds had found it difficult to suppress; and not the less painfully, because, in

pursuance of his well-digested plans, he received her greeting with almost more than his accustomed courtesy of the old school. He even extended his hand to the boy, with the tender familiarity of a parent; till his generous forbearance brought tears into the eyes of Sophia.

Too deeply absorbed by the kindly demeanour of her friend and benefactor to take heed of the train by which he was followed into the room, she continued to answer his inquiries concerning her visit and her journey; till, on turning from his chair, which was placed next to that appropriated to the reading-desk, she saw that every seat was occupied, save those intended for herself and her son.

Beside Sir Giles Cressingham, sat Docket, supported by his two clerks; all three being occupied by the arrangement of certain rolls of parchment, each of which consisted of a multiplicity of skins. The huge silver standish adorned in relief with the family arms, which stood at hand, seemed as judiciously matched in proportion with these weighty documents, as the tremendous sword of the Castle of Otranto, with its helmet of gigantic dimensions.

But on glancing beyond the chair placed at the right hand of Athanasius Docket, the cheeks of the gentle Sophia became suddenly crimsoned, to subside into deathly paleness; for, lo! for the first time for nine years past, she found herself in the presence of her father!—A momentary impulse urged her to rush forward and throw herself into his arms. But the stern and formal salutation of Richard Cressingham seemed to mark the limits he chose to assign to their intercourse; and the next moment, Sophia congratulated herself that she had not given way to the instincts of filial tenderness, so long and so repeatedly outraged. The stony gaze with which her father fixed his eyes upon a grandchild whom he saw for the first time, recalled forcibly to her mind the contempt lavished by her family upon her ill-fated husband.

In the harsh countenance of Mr. Cressingham, she now beheld only the persecutor of poor Blair. She even noticed that, although his head was now silvered and his face furrowed by the progress of years, its expression was more than ever obdurate and defying. She had not only lost a father in the stern and remorseless man before her, but had

gained an enemy. Quailing under his chilling recognition, she felt persuaded that his presence in that room boded no good to her or hers.

Next to her father, came Doctor Chaffles, who was insinuating in whispers to Docket that his desk was placed in the worst possible position as regarded the light, and trying to persuade him to derange Sir Giles and the whole party for the gratification of his officious zeal. Side by side with the Doctor sat his tender helpmate, Mrs. Chaffles, who never entered the gates of the Hall save for an annual dinner of ceremony on the birthday of the proprietor; but who was especially invited on the present occasion by Sir Giles, his cruel cunning suggesting that the mortification of a woman is never so complete as when endured under the scrutiny of persons of her own sex.

Behind these conscript authorities were ranged a row of minor seats for the reception of the lower house, or steward's room, assembled as if for family prayers; while, fidgetting between the two orders, stood a certain little man, arrayed, even at that early hour, in sticking-plaster shorts, black silk stockings, and silver shoe-buckles, who might have incurred suspicion as a dancing-master, but that he was only too well known to all present as the pet apothecary of the valetudinarian of Stoke Paddocks, the professional torturer of the establishment.

The circle consisted, in short, of pretty nearly the same individuals who would have been assembled in that very room to witness the nuptials projected by Sir Giles Cressingham with the woman who sat there pale and trembling, forseeing some impending anathema; and as the baronet gazed searchingly around him, to ascertain that every human being was present to whom he wished to exhibit her downfall,—triumph glared in his eyes, and flushed his withered cheeks with a hectic altogether unnatural. It was easy to perceive that the long stagnant current of his blood was strangely stimulated by the excitement of his unusual emotions. Before the sitting opened its proceedings, he even proposed, albeit unaccustomed to confront the contact of the external atmosphere even at midsummer, that one of the drawing-room windows should be opened for the refreshment of air; and great indeed was the relief of all present when a cur-

rent of the warm, balmy breath of summer swept through the dreary saloon.

"I believe we are all ready, Mr. Docket,—you may proceed to explain the business of the day," observed Sir Giles, in a voice less tremulous and more shrill than usual; whereupon the family solicitor, rising from his seat and ceremoniously taking off his spectacles, pompously announced to his auditors that they were assembled to become witnesses of the execution of the *last* will of Sir Giles Cressingham then and there present;—that honorable gentleman having been apprized by certain of his nearest of kin that his infirmities and decrepitude were of a nature to prove that his days were drawing to a close.

As Docket gave utterance to this last insinuation, a malignant glance from the twinkling eyes of his patron towards poor Sophia, conveyed their exposition. But the taunt was unheed by Mrs. Blair. The fortunes of the noble boy who stood heedless by her side, were too deeply concerned in the passing scene, to admit of her referring one detail of its pomp and circumstance to herself. Had she been less absorbed, she must have noticed her father's air of exultation. It was clear that Richard Cressingham was fully aware of the nature of her offence towards the head of the family, as well as of the retribution by which it was about to be visited.

The smile of triumph had not subsided from his paternal face, when Docket, in a sonorous voice, began to recite the contents of one of the rolls of parchment; the preamble of which announced it to be "the last will and testament of Giles Marmaduke Cressingham, Baronet, of Stoke Paddocks, in the county of Buckingham," and a vast number of other places in a number of other counties, "now residing in the above named, his principal seat, and in a sound state of body and mind."

The mummy in the yellow flannels, whose mind was at that moment distracted by evil passions enough to have filled a whole penitentiary with delinquents, or a whole lunatic asylum with patients, bowed complacently on hearing the usual form, as if it conveyed a certificate of mental and bodily sanity, yet immediately proceeded to give proof to the contrary; for when Docket, about to enter into the WHERE-

AS department of the will, in which, in order to increase the amount of his own profits, he had introduced *verbatim* the title-deeds of certain estates, as well as several original grants and charters, judiciously suggested that it would suffice the purpose of the Baronet and the patience of the company to run over the few first words of every clause, Sir Giles insisted that every syllable should be inflicted upon himself and his friends.

The enumeration of his wealth and splendor purported to strike repentance into the soul of the graceless Sophia.

But the first blow conveyed in the words "hereby cancelling and annulling all former wills or codicils of wills," had sufficed to render her callous to all that was to follow.—She had sense enough to perceive that Sir Giles Cressingham would not cancel and annul the will made in favor of her boy, merely to indulge his lawyers with the profit of drawing up another of similar purport;—and feeling that all was lost for Reginald, cared as little to learn the amount of the baronet's enormous property, as the name of the devisee. She sat there as one stupified; her indisposition as clearly manifest as the innocence of Doctor Chaffles of all share in his patron's plan of vengeance; for, on seeing her turn so pale, the vicar officiously whispered her to change her seat for one nearer to the window, while the vicar's lady obligingly offered a bottle of salts; and both new better than to have interfered in her behalf, had they been apprized of her approaching exile from the court of Stoke. Declining their interposition, however, the young widow seemed to derive some relief from motioning the boy, who was leaning against her, to a seat. It was too trying to look upon the handsome, animated countenance of the injured Reginald at such a moment!

Doctor Chaffles nodded approvingly, conceiving the change to be suggested by the extreme heat of the room. The progress of the morning had brought the summer sun full upon the windows; yet such was the awe in which Sir Giles was held by his dependents, that till *he* was pleased to find the brightness oppressive, no one ventured to hint that the Venetian blinds had better be closed. Like the King of Spain, whom the etiquette of his court compelled to be stifled by a brasier, they bore without a mur-

mur the increasing fervor of the atmosphere, aggravated by the presence of eight-and twenty persons, rather than presume to feel differently from the Ali Pacha of the county of Bucks. Each whispered to his neighbor that there was thunder in the air,—that a heavy storm was approaching. Every face was flushed,—partly with the heat, partly with the excitement of the hour;—the lawyers from the ardor of their task,—Richard Cressingham with the earnestness of an heir presumptive,—the Chaffle's with the pride of having been invited to assist at a family solemnity at the Hall,—and all the domestics with the idea that the ceremony of signing a will on the part of Sir Giles, must announce some sort of intention of betaking himself to a better or worse place than Stoke Paddocks. They seemed to anticipate that their own most welcome emancipation was approaching,—accompanied, of course, with decent mourning and annuities for life.

But the person most heated, both by inward and external excitement, was the pompous testator presiding over the assembly! The veins in his forehead were swollen.—his eyes bloodshot,—his lips compressed, as by the laboring of his lungs. Yet the glare of those bloodshot eyes increased in earnestness, and the scowl of that brow in triumphant malignity, at every fresh recital of the vastness of his earthly possessions, by way of taunt to the woman and child about to be driven forth from his Garden of Eden. It seemed as if, till that moment, even *he* had never been fully aware of his own consequence as lord of so many manors, and sultan of so many pachalics. He appeared to expand with the detail. His pride was growing too big for his body. His aristocratic blood was boiling too ardently in his enfeebled veins. Nearly three hours had been expended in reading the magniloquent will, every moment of which served only to stimulate the morbid eagerness of the vindictive testator.

As yet, only the names of the trustees had been disclosed; no allusion had been made to that of the "sole heir and residuary legatee," for whose benefit that trust was created. But as Docket approached the two last skins of parchment which were to crown the work of vengeance, and point out the fortunate individual about to supersede

young Reginald Blair as inheritor of one of the finest landed properties in the kingdom, a peculiar glance of intelligence was exchanged between one of the black-suited aide-camps of Mr. Athanasius Docket and Richard Cressingham; after which, the latter assumed an air of listless unconcern, like a country actor exaggerating in his part the assumption of indifference.

Far greater exaggeration, however, was perceptible in the looks and gestures of one who was *no* actor in the business,—one whose emotions on the occasion were cruelly real. The wasted hands of Sir Giles Cressingham became involuntarily clenched as he listened; and his eyes were fixed with the intensity of a beast of prey upon those of Mrs. Blair. His dress, usually motionless as the shroud enfolding the dead, seemed to heave and quicken with the agitation of his feelings. It was *his* turn to triumph. She was about to learn that *he* was omipotent, and *she* an alien and a beggar.

Just as the fatal words were about to be pronounced by Docket, whose husky voice seemed to clear itself, and whose weary visage to brighten as he approached the climax of his work, a shriek burst from the lips of Mrs. Blair, which suspended the decree.

Fascinated as by the glance of a rattlesnake, her eyes had been fixed on those of Sir Giles; and she was the only person present who discovered that they had become suddenly glassy,—that his face was livid,—his jaw fallen,—his whole form motionless.

Unable to move or speak, she pointed in silent agony to his chair. In a moment the parchments lay disregarded on the table. All present were crowding round THE CORPSE!—

## CHAPTER IV.

"He dies and makes no sign!
Oh! God—forgive him!"

HENRY IV.

THAT was a solemn evening at The Wilderness. On re-entering her home, Mrs. Blair could not but feel that an especial interposition of Providence had prevented her and her son from becoming shelterless. She regarded the events of the day, to others a source of horror and consternation, with sentiments of humble veneration, characteristic of her gentle nature.

A thunderbolt falling from heaven to smite to the dust some impious tyrant of old, could scarcely have exhibited a more fearful instance of Divine judgment than the fate of Sir Giles Cressingham, howbeit arising purely from a combination of physical causes. The menials of the house decided, of course, that he died of a fit produced by the fear of death, at the moment of signing his will; the lawyers, of the perturbation consequent upon mental excitement; the vicar and vicaress, of the oppression of an overheated chamber; the apothecary (ashamed of not having interfered to demand freer ventilation), because the term of a long-exhausted constitution was arrived; Richard Cressingham, because the devil would have it; and Mrs. Blair, because the hand of Providence had protected the fortunes of the widow and the orphan!—

Whatever the instrument by which the curse was signified, he was gone! The tyrant was stripped of his power the miser of his gold, the angry man of his will to usurp the attributes of GOD. The right arm about to perpetuate an act of revenge, was already nerveless; the fevered frame moistened by the chilly damps of death; the scowling eye overfilmed: the despot shrivelled into a senseless lump of clay! His servants, who had waited upon his whims with submission in their voices, but hatred in their hearts, satisfied by an ejaculation of the lawyers on the first verification of his decease, that the new will was inoperative, but that, the

old one remaining uncancelled, their legacies were still valid, were at very little pains to disguise their indifference to the event. Within a few hours after the decease of Sir Giles Cressingham, voices were heard in cheerful colloquy under his roof, which had been wont to speak in peevish whispers; and there was laughter in the offices, and everywhere a sensation of relief. Reversing the usual order of things, the house of death proved anything but a house of mourning.

Although the blinds, so providentially neglected in the morning, were now carefully closed, the Hall itself had acquired an air of cheerfulness from the catastrophe. The double windows of the baronet's chamber, the very hinges of which had grown rusty from want of use, were thrown open. A greater stir than had prevailed at the Hall for years arose from the assembling a jury, which the wantonness of the law chose to summon together to record the stereotyped verdict of "DIED BY THE VISITATION OF GOD;" just as they would have inflicted one of "FOUND DROWNED," upon the body of some pauper thrust into a horsepond by her husband.

Could any doubt, meanwhile, have arisen in Richard Cressingham's mind as to his own position with regard to the property, it must have evaporated on noting the nature of Mr. Athanasius Docket's address to Mrs. Blair, the very moment Drench the apothecary pronounced that all was over; and the respectful bow which qualified his mode of seizing the hand of little Reginald.—His condolences on the death of their cousin were, in fact, eager congratulations upon their accession to a princely fortune.—Of both wills, the said Athanasius was appointed acting executor. No one, therefore, was more competent to judge their powers and intentions; and he made it as plain as if revealed by that first of truth-tellers, the *Gazette*, that the instrument which associated Mrs. Sophia Blair, widow, with him in the executorship, was that which was to put money in his own purse as well as into that of her son.

At that moment, had Sophia been cognizant of anything that was passing around her, she would have hurried towards her father with overtures for reconciliation; nay, in the agitation of her soul, would probably have flung her-

self into his arms or at his feet, and implored his blessing. But her feelings were paralyzed with horror. She saw nothing,—she understood nothing,—she even fancied that animation might yet be restored to the lifeless corpse,—repeated but infructuous attempts having been made by Drench to open the jugular vein.

It was not till many hours afterwards,—it was not till, tranquilized by the hush of evening in her own quiet home, —that the awe-struck woman became fully conscious of the great changes that had taken place, and in some degree aware of her position. But when she *then* despatched a messenger to the Hall with a letter to her father, it appeared that Mr. Cressingham had already departed for his family seat; unwilling to remain at Stoke Paddocks, to exhibit the vexation and disappointment of his heart. The overtures of reconciliation, which would have come with so good a grace from the mother of the heir, consequently arrived too late.

It was perhaps the extravagant outburst of grief with which poor Sophia received back from the hands of Docket the missive thus fruitlessly forwarded to the Hall, which revealed to the lawyer the amiable weakness of the character over which his position enabled him to assume an important influence. Conjoined with her in the execution of the will, as joint-guardians and trustees of the fortunate heir, it would be hard but a minority of ten years would enable the lawyer to lay aside all other professional cares, and enrol himself at some later period among the landed gentry of the county of Bucks.

Twenty years of continual intercourse with Sir Giles Cressingham, had not tended to the mollification of his heart or the strengthening of his principles; and Docket's first notion, on recovering from the stunning shock of finding the castle in the air he had been building up with pounce and parchment for Richard Cressingham vanish into the clouds, was to construct one for his own purpose, on earth, of more solid materials. The Stoke estates seemed to lie at his all but absolute disposal.

During the preparations for the funeral, nothing could exceed the consequentiality of the attorney in the assumption and manifestation of his new functions. The establishment

at the Hall already looked up to *him* rather than to the minor, as lord of the ascendant. *He* was to pay the bills, *he* was to discharge the legacies; for many years to come *he* was to be all in all at Stoke Paddocks.

Sophia long debased by a life of dependance, and just then peculiarly enfeebled by the recent shock upon her spirits, unconsciously assisted to magnify the increasing prerogative of the executor; while Reginald, a shy, gentle boy, was only too ready to submit to the authority of one who seemed inclined to exercise it for the promotion of his pleasures.

It was amusing to see how instantaneously the dirty dog of Sir Giles Cressingham expanded into a man having authority;—issuing commands to menials, and inditing despatches, in the imperative mood, to bankers and stock-brokers. Not only did his manners attain a sort of instantaneous polish, but his mind appeared to have acquired preternatural consistency from the mere reaction of his unprecedented position. People might have inferred from his lofty bearing that it was he, Athanasius Docket, and not young Reginald, the kinsman of Sir Giles Cressingham, who was come into possession of seven-and-forty thousand a year.

A very short space was allowed for pomposity; the tenure of both being equally equivocal. Scarcely was Sir Giles laid in the grave, when bills were filed in Chancery, and processes served on the executors, and all sorts of grievances and aggravations attempted on the part, on one side, of Sir John Cressingham, as heir at law; and on the other, of Richard Cressingham, Esq., who contended for the execution of a nuncupative will in his favor.

Troublesome and expensive litigation, in short, constituted, as in many other cases, the first fruits of inheritance. Poor Mrs. Blair, who had flattered herself, or rather who had been flattered by Docket, that the fortunes of her son were now secure, and who had already taken the preliminary steps for sending him to Eton with a private tutor and establishing herself at the Hall, was overwhelmed by a state of things almost more painful to bear than her original dependence. Familiar by hearsay, like all the rest of the world, with the uncertainties of the law and the ruinous de-

lays of Chancery, to find *herself*, without money and without protection, suddenly launched upon this sea of troubles was a trial almost beyond her fortitude. Her sole consolation lay in a woman's unfailing and unavailing solace—tears; and instead of bestirring herself to seek advice, she wept over her own and Reginald's destinies, without forming a conjecture how they were to be amended. Like some victim of the days of fable, exposed to the jaws of a devouring monster, she beheld the fiery dragon Law advancing with extended jaws towards her, too much overwhelmed to hazard a single effort in her defence.

This was pretty nearly such a position of affairs as Docket had anticipated. When disappointed in his expectations of converting the Cressingham executorship into a quiet farm, to be enjoyed and managed at his own good liking, it afforded some comfort that costly proceedings would eventually secure to his hands, as attorney, the profits of which he was for the present defrauded as trustee. Though a receiver was appointed for the property, and though both the litigating parties had petitioned to have the Hall shut up and the expensive establishment reduced, till the hearing of the cause, Docket, as guardian of the minor and acting solicitor to the will, foresaw so vast an outlay in the way of pounce and parchment, as insured a liberal inheritance, for the eventual apportionment of an incontestible will and testament of his own. Meanwhile, the depression of Mrs. Blair placed *her*, and consequently the estate, almost at his disposal. It was through *him* she had to obtain the funds necessary for carrying on the suit:—it was from *him* she must seek the *counsels* indispensable for carrying on the suit:—his kindness and advice were to be all in all to the widow and orphan.

To a *poor* widow and *needy* orphan kindness and advice would, perhaps, have been cautiously administered by so shrewd a man. But "the mother of the heir of his patron Sir Giles was entitled to his utmost sympathy;" and nothing could be more diffusely pompous than his assurances to Sophia that she might rely upon him through all extremities. He advised, meanwhile, that Eton should be given up for the present; and affected to obtain the sanction of the Court of Chancery to her continued sojourn at The

Wilderness, and retain at his own risk, the attendance of the tutor originally procured for Reginald by his intervention with Sir Giles.

An absolute monarchy was consequently once more established at The Wilderness. Fixing her devout faith upon the advice of one who, in the absence of natural protectors, was her only friend,—all she knew of the nature of her claims,—all she understood of her probabilities of success, were derived from this troubled and turbid source of information. Sophia was shy and timid. Most people admire shyness and timidity in women. Some go so far as to cultivate them, as virtues, in their wives and children; little reflecting how dangerously such qualities, however ornamental to the female character, conduce to place a woman at the mercy of designing persons, whether brilliant seducers or humdrum attorneys;—or how thoroughly they may invalidate the best qualities of the heart.

The daughter of Richard Cressingham had been brought up in mental subjection,—utterly ignorant of the value of money, or the realities of life; every one calling her that pretty, artless creature, Sophia Cressingham;—and the consequence was, an imprudent elopement.

Oppressed still more grievously by the patronage of the kinsman who affected to have stepped forward chivalrously in her behalf, she gradually lost all energy of mind, all power of self-reliance; and at length, hunted by persecution, reviled by her father and family as an artful designer, and stigmatized by Chancery documents which, in her ignorance of business, she fancied as public as if recited at Charing cross, she was harrassed by the dread of appearing over-solicitous for the things of this world, even in her interviews with her co-executor.

She dared not propose referring her case to higher councils. She was assured in so authoritative a tone by Docket her business was safe in his hands, that she resigned herself to stifle her anxieties during his absence; and when he came, to accept such information of the progress of her affairs as he chose to vouchsafe.

Poor Reginald, meanwhile, found little alteration in his position. He was not a whit more adored by his mother and nurse Adams, as the proprietor of the Hall, nor a whit

less snubbed by his tutor. All accesses to The Wilderness were closed, saving those under the authority of the attorney; who was careful to circulate in the neigborhood an opinion that the claims of the heir-at-law were teneable, and the infirmity of mind of Sir Giles only too likely to be established.

In such uncertainties passed the first tedious winter succeeding the death of Sir Giles.

"I am sure I wonder what people meant by congratulating me after the poor old gentleman died," observed the boy, one day, to the good old nurse, the only person not to be debarred from treating him with the deference due to the head of the family. "The Hall is shut up. Half the keepers are sent away; and in their place, there is a set of surly, ill-conditioned fellows, who molest me by their interference every time I set foot in the park. I don't understand it all. If I am to be master at Stoke, it seems strange that I am so much less kindly used there, than while Sir Giles was alive! Nobody comes here now, but that tiresome creature, old Docket, whose visits always leave mamma in tears; and who make her believe that I am better here, plodding on with Mr. McAvoy, than at Eton,—but that I must not run about the village, or play with poor little Justina Chaffles, as I used to do. I don't want to be a rich man. I don't care to be master at the Hall. But I *do* wish we had a nice, comfortable cottage of our own,—with cheerful, pleasant people to talk to; and that I may never hear the name of a lawyer, or see the sour face of old Docket again."

It was not often that the boy was allowed leisure for such colloquies as these. Docket had succeeded in persuading the anxious mother that a boy with such wonderful prospects ought to be wonderfully learned; and that twice as much Latin and Greek would be required of him as of other young men. Study, therefore—laborious study—was the order of the day; and even when Reginald was relieved, in the evening, from the documentations of his pedagogue, it was only to find his mother, harassed and care-worn, musing beside her solitary hearth, and unapt for conversation.

Her solitary meditations, on the other hand, became daily more perplexing, as her situation grew more and more com-

plicated. Scarcely a cheering ray was allowed by Docket to reach the heart upon which he had fastened his bat-like clutch. Invariably, his first movement on entering the drawing-room at The Wilderness was to shake his head. His first communication was sure to be the recital of some fresh proceeding on the part of Sir John Cressingham, or some new and cruel misrepresentation on the part of her father; till poor Sophia actually trembled to confront the eye of a stranger, so persuaded was she that the imputed turpitude of her conduct had steeled all hearts against her and her son.

Mistrust and anxiety, by increasing her natural shyness, at length produced the evil of which she stood in dread. Her reserve began to pass for pride with the vicar's lady and the few other country neighbors who found it worth while to frequent a house in which sounds of feasting and rejoicing were unknown. Some went so far as to decide that Mrs. Blair, under the influence of her prodigious expectations, was growing thoroughly disagreeable; and amid the mutual dissatisfactions thus engendered, the poor aggrieved woman found relief in closing her doors altogether, save against the visitations of her faithful Amadis, Athanasius Docket. The attorney, as he anticipated, had it completely his own way.

Meanwhile the Chancery suit went on, Chancery-wise. Though, whenever he saw her sinking into positive despondency, the attorney renewed his attestations that the cause was safe;—that the proceedings were inevitably slow, but that the opinion of the profession was in her favor, the mole-like working of her adversaries was continualy throwing up fresh obstacles under her feet; and so vehement and so active became the rival claimants of the Cressingham estates, that, as far as regarded the public mind, the rights of her son appeared to have lost their tenability.

Under such circumstances, her pecuniary difficulties increased daily. A distringas had been placed upon the property. Every arrangement for an allowance to the minor was negatived or traversed; and poor Reginald was perpetually saddened by the sight of his mother's despondency, and the discussion of necessities and expedients such as ought never to have come to the knowledge of his young mind. Money was the constant theme of Sophia's conversation.

She fancied the shy, gentle boy heedless of what was passing. But, in the rare intervals of his studies, his ears were drinking in terrible lessons of the omnipotence of riches as an instrument of human happiness, and as connected with domestic sorrows peculiarly his own.

Darker still, however, were fated to be the prospects of the widow. At the close of two years and a half, Docket himself, whose misgivings on the subject of the great cause of Cressingham *versus* Cressingham had hitherto been affected, grew *really* anxious on the subject. Things were taking an unfavorable turn. A change of ministry had produced a change in the legislative wisdom of the land; and rumors were afloat that a new light was likely to operate a decision fatal to the minor.

Trembling for the advances he had made, and foreseeing a barbarous taxation of his professional demands, Docket vented his disappointment upon his unhappy client; setting before her, in the darkest colors, the extremities to which she would be reduced should the general opinion prove correct; till Sophia began to look back to her gloomy lodging at Reading, and her heavy maternal labors, as a blessed and peaceful existence compared with the load of debt and shame under which she must labor when ignominiously ejected from The Wilderness by Sir John Cressingham.

"We have not one friend on earth to afford us shelter or succor!" was her exclamation to nurse Adams, when the attorney took his departure after these pleasing announcements; and all that Reginald could do, in token of sympathy, was to creep silently to his mother's side and moisten her hand with his tears.

## CHAPTER V.

Full little does thou know who hast not tried
What Hell it is in suing, long to bide,
To speed to day,—to be put back to-morrow,—
To feed on hope,—to pine with care and sorrow.

SPENSER.

HAD such a measure as compromise been possible between the minor and the heir-at-law, Docket would not, at that moment, have hesitated to recommend it, or Mrs. Blair to give it her sanction. But luckily, the improvidence of timid natures was frustrated by the peculiar bearings of the case. All that remained for Sophia was to endure with patience the fluctuations of the attorney's expectations and temper. She was not aware of those of her own; she did not know how often poor Reginald had to suffer from the total absence of method and system in a house supported by expedients, having no plans for the future, and very little enjoyment of the passing day. He found no sympathy. His impulses of youthful joy were checked by the sadness of those by whom he was surrounded. The progress of his mind was unheeded; the bent of his nature unexamined; he was an object of almost painful solicitude to his mother, whether as the heir to fifty thousand a year, or as a beggar. She felt that she was either doing too much or too little for him; and above all, she had not a single easy, unoccupied hour in which to clasp him to her bosom, and glory in him as her child. Nothing was done to cheer him—nothing to cultivate his affections.

"I am sure it is a melancholy sight to meet the poor lad moping about from hill to dale with that priggish-looking tutor of his," was Mrs. Chaffle's confidential lamentation to her husband. "Cressingham, or Blair, or whatever he is to be called, it would have been a blessed thing for him had the old gentleman left him, instead of a *visionary* fortune, two or three comfortable hundreds a year, and to know where to look about him for it. Mrs. Blair's bill at Milham's is running up to more than I choose to say; and as to the lad, he hasn't a comfort or a play-fellow in the world! It

would make your heart ache to see how he colors up, and how the tears come into his eyes whenever Tina runs up to kiss him as she is sure to do when we meet him parading over the meadows with his tutor, as prim as if they were following a funeral."

"I fancy his prospects are not likely to brighten," observed the vicar cheerily, in reply; "that poor woman would never take my advice! I could have put her in the way of managing Sir Giles so as to secure the boy's succession. And now could put her in the way of settling her Chancery affairs without further litigation,—which will not leave the estate a leg to stand upon. Even as it is, why can't she give the poor boy a plain, manly, sensible education?—But that, you see, is her pride, poor woman! She was going to send him to Eton, when she found out that the will was as good as null and void; and now she can't afford that, forsooth, nothing less will content her!—There's Randsley Grammar School. A youth may get his learning quite as well, and his morals better, at Randsley Grammar School than at Eton."

"I must say, it's a great misfortune to the neighborhood to have the business dragging on in the way it does, the estate going to rack, and the house shut up as it is," murmered Mrs. Chaffles.—"It will be the ruin, too, of poor Mr. Docket, who will never be able to remain here after all the provocations that have been going on, when once Sir John has taken possession of the propetry, as is most likely, and most to be desired; for he has sacrificed all his other business, and been maintaining this foolish woman and her son, and will only lose his money at last, and be laughed at for his pains. Why couldn't he manage like *us*? *We* have taken part with no party. Let the cause be decided as it may, the Hall must always remain open to us."

The opinions thus freely canvassed between the vicar and his wife, were tolerably general in the parish. The Wilderness was in complete disfavor. People nodded their heads contemptuously, in alluding to Mrs. Blair; and had scarcely the civility to touch their hats to the shy boy, when they met him musing in the green lanes or fishing in the solitary stream. They wished him well out of his law proceedings,—and they wished him further. It was all the fault of the

Blairs that the circulation of ten thousand a-year was lost in the neighborhood;—and the Stokeites spoke of the chancery suit as if it were simply an injury done to them by poor Sophia.

Such was the melancholy state of affairs when, just at the close of term, about four years after the sudden death of Sir Giles, and the commencement of these harassing litigations, Athanasius Docket, Esq., found himself suddenly summoned to town by the London solicitors in his employ. Apprehending further demands for retaining fees or advances, or he knew not what, Athanasius took care to call at The Wilderness previous to his departure, to express, for the thousandth time, his bitter regret at having ever been involved in affairs so onerous and unsatisfactory; winding up with the usual clause of "not that I mean to blame *you*, my dear Madam, or my young friend; only I *must* say it is rather hard that the whole weight and responsibility of a suit in which I am no wise concerned, should fall upon myself.—I am off to London again!—another useless and expensive journey! However, we must carry it through—we have no choice—we must carry it through. To-morrow, Madam, I hope to be able to report progress."

On the morrow, however, as far as the post was concerned no progress was reported. In reply to Mrs. Blair's inquiries at Docket's office, it appeared that no news had arrived from him: and all she had to do was to submit to another day of suspense, galled by pressing applications for money, and deriving new terrors from a recommendation she had just received from her medical attendant to remove her son from The Wilderness for change of air,—the evident depression of his spirits probably proceeding from incipient indisposition.

"Ill—seriously ill—the air of this place disagreeing with him—yet unable to stir!—My poor, poor boy!—I am sick at heart,—sick of my very life,"—mused the afflicted mother, as she sauntered that evening along the now weedy walks of her garden. "And all this heartburning,—all this mortification—all this alarm—to proceed from that which I once so little estimated, the influence of money!—I cannot enjoy the company of that darling fellow,—I cannot look his tutor or Mr. Docket in the face,—I dare not walk through

the village, or accost my humble neighbors—for want of the means of doing justice to them and myself. The poor come here to be relieved, and I am forced to deny them. My tradesmen come here to be paid, and I am obliged to meet them with excuses. My neighbors shun me—my family despise me. I have not one happy hour—one easy moment! —And yet I have done no wrong!—I am all I was when the world regarded me so kindly. Why—why—was I never made to estimate, in my youth, the omnipotence of mammon in this cole-blooded world?"—

Tears flowed from her eyes as she reflected upon Reginald and his precarious prospects.

It was a clear spring evening; one of those cheerless evenings in April, when a chilly twilight makes one apprehend that the spring flowers and early leaves will be blighted if left out for the night. Everything was dispiriting. The birds seemed to want shelter,—all nature to want geniality. It was too early to return to the house,—too late to remain in the air. Mrs. Blair inquired anxiously for Reginald. He was out with his tutor. He was probably in the park. She accordingly opened the gate of communication leading into it from The Wilderness (the source in Sir Giles's time of so much evil interpretation,) in order to go in search of him and persuade him to come into the house. When lo! ere she had proceeded many paces, she descried a postchaise and four, galloping furiously along the grand avenue, which, as it drew nearer, appeared to be covered with laurels, while the post boys had ribbons streaming from their hats.

"Can there be an election going on?"—was Sophia's first ejaculation—"I have not *heard* of one—But no one is at the trouble of bringing us news of the county *now*."

At that moment, an idea glanced into her mind which caused every drop of blood in her veins to stagnate! If the cause should be decided! If this should be Sir John Cressingham coming to take possession,—coming to drive Reginald from his home! Unable to support herself, she tottered back to the gate, and stood leaning there with her eyes fixed haggardly upon the chaise. But it had now passed the turn leading to the Hall; and came dashing up towards The Wilderness. The wheels struck fire from the flinty

road. The boys huzzaed; and as they drew nearer, an arm waving a white handkerchief was seen protruding from the open window.

Mrs. Blair had lost all self-possession or power of speech when at length the carriage stopped at her door, and Docket leapt out. His eager congratulations, his noisy demonstrations of triumph, however, scarcely arrested her attention. Reginald, whom he had met at the entrance of the park and forced into the chaise, was now in his mother's arms; and in spite of the attorneys outcries of joy, a still small whisper reached her amid all her convulsive sobs, of—"Thank God, dearest mother, your troubles are over!—Nothing but peace and comfort for the remainder of your days!"

All was safe! A decree of the Lords had decided irrevocably in favor of young Cressingham; and though Docket loudly protested he had never a moment doubted that such would be the result, it was clear from his obstreperous joy, which defied for a time the control of even *his* cautious discretion, that he was quite as much taken by surprise as either of his clients.

After the first necessary explanation, Sophia longed eagerly for his departure. She wanted to be alone with her son. She wanted to fall upon his neck and weep. For some time past, she had almost dreaded to be alone with him. He had been a source of as much pain as pleasure to her. She had learned to tremble for him; to fear that he might come to pain—to humiliation! *And now!* Yes!—she yearned to be alone with him,—to fold him in her arms—to own how deeply she had suffered now that her sufferings were over,—and to whisper to *him* as he had whispered to her, "Rejoice greatly—henceforward all around us is to be comfort and peace!"

Poor Sophia! The influence of mammon had done its work even upon *her*. Her very heart expanded in the artificial sunshine produced by a shower of gold. The improvident girl who had fled from her prosperous home to become the drudge of a penniless soldier, had learned to bow the knee to the molten calf among the servile multitudes of mankind.

Within an hour, the gardens of The Wilderness were crowded with the whole population of the village of Stoke! On the

following day the house itself would scarcely contain the obliging neighbors who hastened, with singular alacrity, to offer their congratulations to the happy family. Everybody shook hands with everybody. Everybody smiled in the face of everybody; everybody seemed eager to admit that this accession of fortune, on the part of mother and son, was all that had been wanting to complete the happiness of everybody. The Reginald Blair they have found it so easy to overlook, was become gigantic as Reginald Cressingham. Reginald Blair had been voted dull and moping,—Reginald Cressingham was shy and interesting. They have been angry with Sophia for not sending Reginald Blair to a grammar school; while, as to Reginald Cressingham, they could scarcely bear to have him torn away from them, even to go to Eton!

The atmosphere of The Wilderness, so long stagnant with solitude, or disturbed only by murmurs of discontent, was now astir with cheerful voices and sounds of exultation. The musicians of Stoke came carolling to the gates, with their serpent and bassoon. The ringers nearly brought down the belfry of the old church, with their bob majors. The old Hall was thrown open at the suggestion of Docket, and the people drank the health of the Heir of Stoke Paddocks in hogsheads of his own ale; and condescended to demonstrate their joy by roasting and devouring the sheep and oxen of his flocks and herds. It was impossible to be too much rejoiced at his triumph over his enemies!

The boy, meanwhile, was more embarrassed than gratified by this prodigious accession of popularity. A week before, the little merry girl at the vicarage was the only living being, save his mother and nurse Adams, who troubled her head concerning him; and though, at little more than thirteen, his philosophy, or his curiosity, did not extend so far as to inquire circumstantially into the motives of their sudden enthusiasm, there was nothing in it to excite his own.

For the immediate result of this brilliant transformation of his destinies was to sink him into a schoolboy! His mother was released from a thousand evils. His mother was relieved from the moral nightmare called debt; and the still bitterer visitation of dependence upon the will and pleasure of Athanasius; for though seven years

of minority were still to elapse, she was too equally associated with him in the guardianship, to admit of his harassing her by further contrarieties.

But the heir had no such consciousness of release. All *he* had to do was to take his departure for the "antique towers," in company with the pedagogue who had so belabored him with learning at home; and the shy boy, who, so long as the consummation seemed impossible, desired nothing so earnestly as the companionship of Eton, traditionally dear to him as the place where his father received his education, became appalled beyond measure now that he found himself on the eve of encountering the quizzing and hoaxing of a public school.

When, after an affectionate parting from his mother, he bade adieu for the first and last time to The Wilderness, Reginald would willingly have given half the rent-roll of his estate, for the privilege of remaining planted among the oaks of Stoke Paddocks, safe from the bantering and examination of this wicked world, and able to saunter away the fine weather in the woods, and the rainy days with a book in his hand, or in a game of play with Justina.

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## CHAPTER VI.

"Thus all-accomplished, ere he yet begin
To show the peeping down upon his chin."

COWPER.

IT was a great trial to Sophia to part from her darling son. Even she, disinterested as is the natural tenderness of a mother, found herself setting a higher value upon Reginald now that he was become of such immense importance to other people: and nothing but her recollection of her husband's prejudices in favor of Eton, and the incessant harangues of Athanasius Docket (who found the leisure of his ward hang heavy on his own hands) concerning the necessity of a public education to the career of an English gentleman, would have determined her to part from the idol of

her affections.—What would become of her apart from Reginald?—No sooner, however, was he gone, than she found her time fully disposed of. Engagements poured in upon her; the newspapers, which took such fond delight in recording every particular respecting the interesting youth, in whose favor was decided the great cause of Cressingham *versus* Cressingham had reminded of her existence hundreds of friends of her youth, to whom she had become as one dead; and thousands of Blairs and Cressinghams, who beset her with letters from almost every county in Great Britain.

Between the arrangements of her pecuniary affairs and a sort of tacit reconciliation with the neighborhood, which no longer thought her sulky or voted her proud, she had not leisure to regret the company of her son more than twenty times a day.

All her care was to effect the restoration of Stoke Paddocks to its pristine state.—She had set her heart upon seeing the Hall restored to the same dignified condition as when it had first produced so strong an impression upon her imagination; and while thus occupied in the reorganization of house and household, it was easy for Docket to become once more lord of the ascendant in more important instances. The despotism of former days was all but renewed. Long debarred from the free use of her faculties, Mrs. Blair had almost forgotten how to use them. She was thankful to Docket for the assiduous zeal that spared so much trouble to her indolence; for under his active auspices all the disarray of an estate, racked and tortured by a Chancery suit as by the possession of a devil, was disappearing, and order and magnificence resuming possession of the throne.

"At present, dear Reginald is indifferent to such matters," was Sophia's secret reflection, as the Christmas holidays approached. "Simple in his tastes as he is reserved in his manners, he has not an ambition beyond the chimney corner of The Wilderness! At nearly fourteen, he is still a child. It is not his fault, however, poor fellow, that the retirement in which he was brought up should have confirmed the reserve of his sensitive nature! How overjoyed will he be to find himself in his own quiet home again!—What a relief the seclusion of this place! I only trust our good

friend, Mr. Docket, will not come and wear down his spirits by reference to business, as he does mine; or exercise too much authority over his pursuits. Reginald's timid nature would give way under the interference to which I have learned to submit."

Never had she taken such delight in the renovated beauty of The Wilderness, as now that she was on the point of welcoming home her child. His unsophisticated tastes were likely to pass unheeded a thousand details of luxury and comfort; but even the careless and almost slovenly boy would be pleased to find the gardens restored to all their primitive pride;—the new winter shrubbery of evergreens and well-rolled walks exhibiting all the care of a skilful gardener. His own favorite garden alone had been scrupulously left untouched, that he might enjoy, as in former times, the pleasure of operating his own improvements. Beside it, however, a little hovel had been erected, to contain the new tools and horticultural implements prepared for him by the forethought of his mother, against the return of Spring.

It was after surveying these preparations, and visiting his own old room, newly and commodiously furnished, that Sophia hurried down about the hour appointed for Reginald's arrival. For one so sensitively shy, it would be a trial to meet even herself and Adams, after four months' separation: and when the carriage stopped, she was already on the door-steps, prepared to welcome the little fellow, now almost a stranger at The Wilderness.

Mrs. Blair was scarcely less struck on beholding Sir Giles lifeless in his arm-chair, than at the first aspect of her son! —Young Cressingham advanced to do the honors to her with the ease of a fine gentleman. He had left her an awkward boy,—he was come back a miniature man. There were tears in his eyes, indeed, more manifestly than became his manly dignity, when pressed to the heart of his mother, and earnestly saluted by the old nurse. But he quickly recovered himself,—took his place authoritatively on the hearth-rug,—informed her that, unwilling to trouble her with the company of Mr. McAvoy, he had despatched his tutor, at once, to spend the vacation in the North,—and in-

quired after Docket much in the same patronizing tone he asked after the house-dog.

Sophia no longer wondered that, for the last two months, he should have become remiss in his correspondence. She felt that she should scarcely have understood him, had he written in the style he was talking. While gazing with pride upon his growth and personal improvement, she could enter into the share of a fashionable London tailor in his transformation. But who had effected the marvellous revolution in mind and morals? *Who* had given breadth of spirit, as well as breadth of shoulders? Who had inspired self-reliance? Who had fortified the unstrung nerves? Who had converted poor Blair's timid orphan into the spirited heir of the house of Cressingham? Was it *still* the power of Mammon? Was it in *this* instance the worship of the multitudes bowed down in breathless adoration around the golden calf?

She did not so much as venture to advert to the hovel and garden-tools, or the new pony-chair, in which she had intended to solicit his aid as charioteer.—Already he was giving hints about battues, and talking of a tandem!—

It was almost a comfort to her when, after applying a series of saucy epithets to his guardian and enquiring after the various families of the neighborhood in terms far from complimentary,—after talking of hunters and greyhounds, neat turn-outs, and clever hacks—he condescended to allude to Justina and the old pony!—He asked after them, however, rather in the tone of a patron than a friend.

"I suppose, mother, you don't see much of that horrible old Chaffles woman?" said he; "but my little pet,—how is she?"—I was very near bringing her a macaw, which I saw in Windsor as we drove through! Justina had always such a passion for birds. I suppose we need not trouble ourselves with the old bores at the Vicarage. But surely Tina might be brought to see me?"

Mrs. Blair resolved to defer to some moment less interesting than the first evening of their meeting, her entreaties that he would render to the Vicarage the respect due to the Vicarage; and soon forgot her vexation in delight at his affectionate inquiries after the pony and one or two of his old pensioners in the village.

Eton, however, soon burst forth again!

"I have promised Morton and Holmeswell to give them a week's shooting at Stoke during the holidays," said he; "I suppose you can manage to put them up for me?"

"And who are Morton and Holmeswell?" inquired his mother with some surprise.

"Don't you know Morton and Holmeswell? I thought every one knew Morton and Holmeswell. Morton is the best dressed fellow at Eton; and Holmeswell one of the finest riders in England,—both capital fellows. We dined together at the Christopher the night before I came off. Capital fun, I assure you. Holmeswell was regularly floored!"

The consternation of Mrs. Blair knew no bounds. Even *her* serenity was beginning to be disturbed on finding strangers, even though schoolboys, invited to her house without consulting her inclinations on the subject. But maternal partiality prevailed; and she soon began to make allowances for the young dandy, by assuring herself that he was merely showing off for the astonishment of an over-fond mother. The morrow would restore him to reason. The morrow would bring Docket in all his glory of guardianship. A few words from Docket would place everything straight. The grave authority under which she lay crushed would probably work miracles equal to those of Eton.

The morrow *did* bring Docket—and the morrow witnessed the working of more miracles;—but not of the nature anticipated by Mrs. Blair. Unwilling to witness the humiliation of Reginald on recieving a reprimand, she had judged it better to leave him *tete-a-tete* with the executor, and discreetly left the room.

In about half an hour, she returned; expecting to find the man of the law, as usual, laying down the law, and looking as hard as a bronze statue. She even trembled to look at Reginald, lest the blush of ingenuous shame, produced by merited reproof, should burn too brightly on his cheek.

No need of alarm!—The blushing cheek was that of Docket. The subdued demeanor was that of Docket. It was Reginald who had been laying down the law, and who looked as lofty as the statue. Reginald had been quizzing

his guardian unmercifully on the cut of his coat; and instead of resenting his impertinence, the attorney was all obsequiousness—all courtiership;—quite ready to varnish the boots of his ward, whenever occasion needed.

"I have been talking to Mr. Docket, mother," said he, too politic to drop the Mr. with *him* as with others, lest it should encourage so vulgar a man to take liberties, "I have been talking to Mr. Docket about the shooting, and he promises me excellent sport for Morton and Holmeswell. But we have been agreeing that it will be as well for them to stay at the Hall."

"By no means, my dear boy!" said Mrs. Blair, fearing that her surprise of the preceeding evening might have been unkindly interpreted. "I assure you they will be no inconvenience to me here. There is Mrs. McAvoy's room; and I can easily put up a bed in the blue dressing room.

"Yes, certainly, but I am afraid that sort of thing would scarcely do. You see, Morton is accustomed to—a—a—and Holmeswell is deuced particular. By the way, it will be quite impossible, mother, for you to remain here long; this house is so detestably inconvenient. Mr. Docket agrees with me, that you ought to remove next summer to the Hall, with a suitable establishment. We must petition Chancery for an additional allowance on pretence of keeping up the place. I shall then be fourteen, and shall have some voice in the business. In the mean time, Mr. Docket will be delighted to favor our wishes. It is settled, therefore, that while Holmeswell and Morton are here, we take up our abode *pro. tem.* at the Hall. I should not like them to find my mother lost in the pokiness of this citizen's villa!"

The heart of Mrs. Blair swelled within her. She longed to give him a lesson. She longed to recall to his mind his boyish delight, when the needy widow and child were first transferred to that happy retreat! But she forbore—forbearance had long been habitual to her gentle nature. Besides, she had promised herself never to estrange the confidence of that only son by severity. Her selfishness, under the form of maternal affection, had not courage to do him justice. She saw, too, that she should find no support in her co-trustee. When she raised a few objections to the new

plan, Docket laughed away her scruples,—the first time the priggish attorney had ever seen fit to laugh at a scruple!—and assured her that Reginald's views and habits differed in nothing from those of other young men of his age and degree. He even expressed himself pleased that "the shy boy should at once have associated himself with companions so desirable as Viscount Holmeswell, only son of the Earl of Maunderwell; and Sir Henry Morton, who, on attaining his majority would come into a very pretty property in Leicestershire."

Between the authority of Docket and the assumptions of Reginald, Sophia found that her influence would be speedily superseded; and in the indolence of a crushed spirit, gave up the field without fighting a blow. She had soon occasion to improve her acquaintance with "a neat turn out" and "clever hacks;" for Docket was careful to provide, against the arrival of the threatened guests, precisely such accommodation as was voted necessary by his Etonized ward. A small suit of rooms was fitted up at the Hall, and a couple of grooms, with several horses, suddenly made their appearance in the stables; Mrs. Blair being forced to subscribe to Docket's opinion that, since Reginald already exhibited the tastes of a man of pleasure, it would be safer for them to make his home so pleasant to him, as to leave him no pretext for seeking such indulgences elsewhere. To appease the alarms of the mother, he even undertook to preside at the Hall, during the visit of the young Etonians, upon condition that she agreed to her son's proposition, and installed herself permanently at the Hall, in the course of the ensuing summer.

It is a startling trial to a parent to find the child—the weakling—over whom he has been wont to exercise tender protection, suddenly shoot up into independence. Sophia found that, according to the system of the present day, she had lessons to receive from her son. She, a woman, knew nothing of the world, as now constituted; he, a boy, was comparatively better instructed. Certain it was that he was more versed in the usages of the day, than the amiable recluse of The Wilderness. The accession of fortune which seemed to have increased her diffidence by augmenting her responsibility, had inspired *him* with courage and purpose.

But had it not given too much courage for his strength—

too much purpose for his discretion? Was it not the result of the stimulus of flattery? Had not the boy Crœsus been surrounded with parasites? Did not his advancement, in short, resemble the precocious growth of a plant, over-forced by artificial heat? Sophia was too fond of him—too proud of him—to exercise much judgment on the case. Whether as a shy boy or a microcosmic man, the only son was still the object of her adoration.

There was but one person who exercised sounder discretion. Justina, who, though advanced to the dignity of white frocks, retained at eighty years old all the fearless *naivete* of infancy, openly scouted the pretensions of the fine gentleman of Stoke Paddocks.

"You told me Reginald was coming home," cried she to Mrs. Blair, seizing her by the hand as they met one day at the church door of Stoke, "and I was so glad!—I did love *him* so dearly! But I don't care a bit for Mr. Cressingham. He came one day to see grandpapa, and talk about nothing but hunting and shooting. He took no notice of *me*. But 'tis no great matter; for he is not near such a nice little boy as he used to be!"

Poor Tina, however, was the only person within twenty miles round, of the same opinion. The neighborhood had been so long accustomed to regard Stoke Paddocks as a Paradise Lost, that the promise afforded by the gay young heir of the house of Cressingham, was hailed with delight. The world pronounced that law and equity had, for once, united wisely in favor of the handsome junior, instead of the decrepit Sir John, or his surly brother.

All looked forward to brighter days at the Hall. The sportsman foresaw battues,—the young ladies, balls. Mr. Cressingham was making an admirable beginning. Young as he was, lords and baronets already congregated around him. Though hampered by a vulgar attorney and quizzical mother, the boy had evidently the instincts of a gentleman, and Eton was doing its best towards their development. At fifteen, he might almost have stood for the county.

Athanasius Docket, meanwhile, though scarcely less surprised in the first instance than Mrs. Blair, had sufficient ductility of mind to bow without hesitation to the force of circumstances. As promptly as when, at his patron Sir

Giles's commands, he perused the instrument transferring the inheritance of Stoke from Reginald to his grandfather, did he now determine to win by subservience where he had intended to sway by authority. Perceiving that, in his ward, he had a very different disposition to cope with from the anxious, timid Sophia, his own interests might still be served by the propensities of the young *roue*. If he proceeded as he begun, there was every probability that, before the attainment of his majority, the amount of its savings would be forestalled; and that instead of increasing the rent-roll of the estate by new purchases, it would be diminished by the prodigality of a spendthrift. Should this prove true, it became the duty of a guardian to modify the injury, by keeping him out of the hands of the Jews by private accommodation. Were young Cressingham to die a minor, his property would fall to his mother, from whom the attorney knew that he had nothing to fear in the way of scrutiny. The far-sighted attorney accordingly permitted himself to become the *ame damnee* of one whom he was resolved to render an *ame damnee* of his own. On casting up account with the future, he found that his best mode of insuring a balance in his favor, was by installing himself the Mephistopheles of the young Faustus. If Satan can quote scripture for his purpose, a clever attorney is equally capable of "taking all shapes and bearing many names;"—of preaching, whenever to "do the decent" is the order of the day, and practising, in very antithetical style, wherever it be safe to let the cloven foot peep out, undisguised by a gouty shoe.

He accordingly instituted himself perpetual president of the orgies of the Hall, till Sir Henry Morton assured Reginald that, if old Docket were not quite such a curse of a quiz, he would be a capital good fellow; while Holmeswell was never weary of assuring his friend Cressingham, that he had got a "trump of a guardian." He wished he could give him as an example to his own father; swearing that he "would not only exchange the Earl against him, but throw something into the bargain."

With these views in perspective, it was not surprising that Athanasius should support the determination of Mrs. Blair to remain at The Wilderness, instead of removing to

the Hall. A thousand slight but important indications convinced her that she will do well to entrench herself at once in a home of her own,—the home assigned to her by the baronet,—and to the support of which, her income of three thousand a-year was fully equal. Her son's assumption of independence rendered it necessary that she should have some regard for her own.

Her explanations with him, however, were neither peevish nor resentful. She had not courage or inclination to oppose any desire expressed by her son; but simply assured him that her presence would one day become a painful restraint; and that should he then make this apparent to herself, painful estrangements between them must necessarily ensue. She promised, meanwhile, to exercise her taste and judgment in the renovation and refurnishing of the Hall, upon which he had insisted; and even to preside there whenever the reception of company made her presence desirable.

Again did Sir Henry Morton interfere to assure Cressingham, that he had the most judicious of mothers, as well as the most discreet of guardians;—while Lord Holmeswell vowed to the gods that, could he have changed the worldly, selfish Lady Maunderwell for the gentle, disinterested Sophia *this* time, he would have flung the family diamonds and the home-farm into the lighter scale.

Reginald had no leisure to listen to all these praises. His life, both at Eton and at home, was a round of recreations. He had been too well crammed by McAvoy in his boyhood to find severe application necessary; and between rowing, sailing, cricketing, fishing, hunting, shooting, and a variety of other diversions unsuitable to his years, found life far too pleasant a pastime to take heed of the morrow, or even the afternoon of the passing day.

"Morton and Holmeswell were no doubt right. He did not find either his mother or his guardian much of a bore,—except, the former, who nervous about restive horses,—or the latter, when prosing about the disposal of his borough interest. Old Docket was not so bad a judge of claret, after all. As to his mother—but she was *his* mother, and that was enough!"

As time progressed, the Christmas parties at the Hall became extended in numbers, if not improved in quality.

Nothing can be more absurd than to assert the prevalence of a levelling principle in our public schools. Lord Maunderwell's son was, of course, called "Holmeswell," and fagged in his turn. But when advancing towards the head of the school, he held his aristocratic place in the little community far more decidedly than in after-life at his club. Neither tutors nor chums forgot for a moment that he was the only son of the Earl of Maunderwell; and quite as little were they disposed to overlook the fact, that his friend Cressingham, was in the enjoyment of fifty thousand a-year, good church preferment, and a family mansion where the preserves were excellent and the cellars of high reputation.

The influence and popularity of both was prodigious. It was not without just grounds that Reginald attained at Eton the nickname of the "Heir and many friends." Time was still to prove whether the parody were to hold good throughout; and the unfortunate hare of the fable to find a human representative in the popular young Man of Fortune.

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## CHAPTER VII.

"Lord of himself—that heritage of woe!
That fearful empire, which the human breast
Holds but to keep the soul within from rest."

BYRON.

FROM that period Reginald Cressingham, like the oftenquoted swan of "still St. Mary's Lake," floated double. He became Reginald Cressingham and shadow. The *parvenu* guardian, aware that his future consequence must emanate from his ward, strove, by every means in his power, to amalgamate his own existence with that of Reginald; and as in the case of other parasite plants, this intimate junction was of course at the cost of the nobler tree.

Young Cressingham was as rarely to be seen without Athanasius at his heels, as Don Juan without his Leporello. In any other instance, such intimate companionship might have boded improvement to the younger. But Athanasius

was the disciple rather than the master. He knew nothing, except vulgar fractions, more than Reginald; while Reginald, though a school-boy, knew a thousand things that were heathen Greek to the attorney.

The factitious atmosphere and soil engendered by enormous wealth, was bringing forth the usual result. From his infancy the boy had been the sport of fortune; and his faculties, long repressed by her chilling power, were now starting up into exuberant and barren verdure. The branches were wild and fanciful, but fruit was wanting. As little Justina, the orphan grandchild of the vicar of Stoke, was once reproved by grandmamma for her audacity in remarking—"There always seemed to be something make-believe in Reginald."

Nevertheless, four years after his accession of fortune, Cressingham of Stoke Paddocks was pronounced to be the finest gentleman at Oxford. Fine gentlemanism, in its vulgar acceptation, is a fluctuating accomplishment; uncertain as every other mere matter of fashion. To dandyism succeeds slang, and from slang the world of blockheads recur to dandyism; the turf, the field, the road, cigars, whiskey, or Champagne, being the exceedingly right thing *one* term, and the exceedingly wrong one, the next.

Even scholarship has its turn. When, by rare accident, the popular young Duke or Marquis of Christchurch happens to be marked for an Honour, dunces fall in general estimation; and the fine gentleman for once allows himself to be seen in the livery of the Muses, instead of a bang-up by Stultz, or a *paletot* of Blin.

Some such auspicious influence proved of singular advantage to Reginald Cressingham. Clever men happened to be the order of the day. Two or three young Oxonians had recently distinguished themselves in Parliament, or by writing tolerable verses, or as men of wit and pleasure; and the man who aspired to pleasure *without* wit had consequently fallen in the market. Books were the pet folly in vogue.

Not that there was much danger of such pretenders to literature working their way into *very* severe pedantry. Classical scholarship was too high an aim for these young aspirants. On Cressingham's table lay piles of poetry and

romance,—of light memoirs and heavy histories; just as, when roueism was in vogue, his Havannahs had arrived in bales, and his Maraschino in hampers; the wealth which entitled him to play the fool more splendidly than his neighbors, having enabled him to order from a London bookseller a consignment of everything new that came out.

Next, perhaps, to a course of solid reading under the guidance of a wise preceptor, the most advantageous thing for an intelligent mind is a course of indiscriminate reading, under its own,—as a young dog is best taught to swim by throwing it from a bridge into a current. Cressingham was a young man of excellent if not distinguished abilities. The noise of dissipation was beginning to lose its charm. He had seen almost enough of horses and grooms,—tandem racing and jollification. A serious illness, brought on by excesses of every kind, had confined him to his rooms six dreary weeks; during which he found enlightened by the failure of his usual reckless and deceptive spirits, the selfish levity of Morton Holmeswell and Co., grow insupportable. On his recovery, he became almost as much disgusted with his previous habits of life, as with the friends from whom they had been imbibed.

Convalescence, meanwhile, inspired a new passion as onerous, if not so perilous to life and limb as a hunting stable. Incapaciated for boisterous enjoyments, he became addicted to whist.—Whist happened to be the thing in vogue; and the capital fellows infesting Cressingham's room, conceiving the young man of fortune entitled to enjoy the thing in vogue in its most costly shape, assured him that a few months' practice would render him the best player at Ch. Ch. Athanasius had no reason to infer, from the demands on his private account, that the minor had renounced two or three most expensive pursuits, in order to devote himself exclusively to a pleasure, which *he* had been enjoying for years at the modest mucle of half-a-dozen shillings per week.

Such was the origin of Reginald's devotion to study,—if study it could be called. He was now devoted to a sedentary life; drank green tea instead of claret, and took a quiet airing, instead of declaring war upon all the fences in the county. He lived in what *he* called "a little quiet set

of his own," and the intervals of the academic torture indispensable even to Cressingham of Stoke Paddocks, were divided between "What are trumps?" and the hot-pressed literature of St. James street. Precisely such works as my reader has now in his hand, lay heaped, in their Quaker-colored covers, upon his table, to be lounged over in his dressing-gown, or dozed over upon his damask sofa.

A sort of hero-of-romance existence was accordingly beginning to develop itself to his imagination. He was now nineteen, and singularly good-looking; fair, and scarcely above the common height, yet possessed of so elegant a physiognomy and air, as to merit the appellation of "distinguished," applied in England almost exclusively to the tall and dark; and on the continent, to a pigmy or Albinos, if endowed with nobility of countenance and gesture. There was every reason to anticipate that the Heir with many friends, would shortly become the Heir with many loves.

But it was not alone with reference to his present or future conquests, that Reginald began to find a dangerous delight in the pages of fiction. He was beginning to muse with earnest consideration upon the peculiarities of his situation. Reversing the usual order of things, the circumstances which had converted the boy into a man, were now converting the man into a boy. He was actually bewildered by the discrepancy between his prominent position in the world, and his imperfectly developed sentiments and feelings.

No parallel presented itself for his singular fortunes. There were just then at Oxford one or two contemporaries, in the enjoyment of prospects as brilliant as his own. But these had been the fruit of inheritance,—soberly descending from sire to son, and shackled by the usual impediments of aristocratic connection,—formal dowagers,—and the adamantine fetters of pedigree and pride. Not one of them but was a slave to duties arising out of the Crusades. Not one of them but was a mere link of the human chain extending from the Norman Conquest to the last dying speech of English monarchy, whose destiny probably resembles that of the phœnix;—to expire only that a brighter bird of the same species, of more brilliant plumage and greater

force of pinion, may arise from its ashes. Not one of them was free, like *him*, to choose a wife,—to choose a party,—to choose a destination.

His position was unique, in short, save in the pages of the novelist; and it was there accordingly that young Cressingham sought for sympathy and precedent. It was there he read of heroes sinking under the gifts of fortune,—young, handsome, accomplished,—(and discontented)—as himself. It was there he introduced himself to ideal heroines, Matildas or Geraldines, fancying himself alternately a Pelham or a Vivian Grey,—a Granby or a Gerfaut;—the Lord Glenmore or Clarence Hervey of Miss Edgeworth, or the Arthur of the alcoholic pages of Balzac, Frederic Soulie, or Eugene Sue.

Reginald could not forbear smiling when it one day presented itself to his mind that, for once, he had distanced the emulation of Docket. Hitherto, at an humble distance, Athanasius had trod in all his footsteps. Since the epoch of the establishment of the will and the re-organization of the household at the Hall, the wily guardian had instinctively become knowing in horseflesh, discriminating in wine, an epicure, a connoisseur,—nay, almost a dandy, for the jeers of Morton and Holmeswell had induced him to change the cut of his garments just as the habits of Reginald compelled him to alter his stake from sixpenny points to pounds. But the angular Beau Shatterly of fifty-five was scarcely likely to fancy himself into a Sir Charles Grandison, or to interfere with the loves and graces of his ward. But though he had distanced the attorney, he was far from being alone in his glory. There were still Mortons and Holmeswell neck and neck with him in the career of romanticism, as formerly in that of sportsmanship and dissipation. So long as a young man in *his* position chose to become the founder of a school, no likelihood of any want of disciples. A genteel melancholy *a la* Cressingham became the right thing;—a genteel melancholy enlivened by fits and starts of artificial wit.

Because Cressingham of Stoke Paddocks fancied himself satiated, at nineteen, with the pleasures of life, the youth of Ch. Ch. assumed an air of picturesque languor, and tried to subdue their joyous impulses of health and spirits to the elegant philosophy of a Jacques in his teens, in the enjoy-

ment of fifty thousand a year;—till Gottingen or Jena would have been puzzled to produce a more dreamy race of illuminati than those who filled up the intervals of Cressingham's nightly whist, by prating mysticism and mouthing verses to imaginary Mignons.

"And what was Cress doing when you left Oxford?" inquired Morton, of Lord Holmeswell, the former of whom had six months the start of Reginald at Eton and Oxford, and the latter a year.

"Not much worth speaking of, I fancy. But I have not been near him this winter. Cress is grown a regular spooney. Oxford is not what it was in your time. But Cress is the cursedest spooney of them all."

"He was getting tolerably soft before *I* left," resumed Morton; "had sold off his hunters, and was setting up for a reading man! Now 'pon my soul one can't stand a man in Cress's position dwindling into a reading man! Very well for such fellows as Percy,—(Percy of Maudlin I mean.) Percy is a younger son, without a guinea, and has his way to make in Parliament. I can forgive Percy."

"I fancy it was he who first bit Cress with this sentimental turn," observed Holmeswell. "Cress, you know, never had an idea of his own! Don't you remember what a mammy-sick, apron-string animal it was, when it came to Eton? *You* took him in hand, and *I* did what I could with him; but if it had not been for *us*, he would have continued to ride like a tailor and dress like a tailor's apprentice to the day of judgment. By heaven, I have still on my conscience that mulberry-coloured coat with silver buttons of the old attorney's which you chose Cress to adopt—after you had figured in one at the boat race till laughed out of countenance, and which the guardian copied from his ward, as the right thing."

"After all, what an absurd mishmash it all was, down at that place of Cressingham's!"—added Morton, laughing. "Such cursed roads and such a detestable neighbourhood."

"And then the housekeeper-mother and Lawyer Endless of a guardian;—and Cress, with all the vulgar tastes and ambitions of a *parvenu*. For after all he is a *parvenu*. He inherits his estate from the mother's side, who, quizzy as she is, has gentle blood in her veins. But the father was

a nothing, I fancy,—neither family nor fortune. Old Cressingham, the grandfather, never saw her again, you know, after the match.

"Yet Cress is as proud as a peaoock," observed Morton.

"*Purse* proud," added Lord Holmeswell, shrugging his shoulders. "If there be a thing on earth incomprehensible to *me*, it is purse pride!"—

Sir Henry Morton, though secretly of opinion that there were many things on earth equally incomprehensible to the young Viscount, and that there was little merit in not being proud of a purse, containing less than a groat, readily assented. They agreed in voting Cress a sad, silly, conceited, vulgar fellow, who would never possess a real friend, or come to good in the world; though neither thought it necessary to admit to the other the amount of I.O.Us. bearing his signature, deposited, among other family archives, in Reginald's deed-chest at Stoke Paddocks,—as completely dead letters as the correspondence amassed by his predecessor.

It was, perhaps, some suspicion of these weighty obligations which induced Mrs. Blair to give a decided preference to the new order of associates who thronged to Stoke Paddocks during the following vacation. They were at least quieter in their deportment and more decent in their habits than the *roues*, whose excesses were still the wonder of the country round. Under these auspices, the library became the favoured region of the house. Just as the cultivation of the stables and cellars distinguished the reign of Morton and Holmeswell, did the appointment of a librarian and the rescue of a family collection of the highest order, attest the more enlightened influence of Percy of Maudlin.

"I am heartily glad that Sir Henry Morton has ceased to come here," observed his mother to Reginald, one day, when the departure of his guests had left him, for a single day at the mercy of The Wilderness. "There was an insolence in his manner which I always wondered how you could endure?"

"Not *insolence*,—the mere *sangfroid* of fashionable life, my dear mother," replied Reginald. "Harry Morton felt towards me as a brother, and used as little ceremony."

"I do not know how you may understand the feelings of

a brother," persisted Mrs. Blair with a smile, "but I can assure you that Mr. Docket once overheard him in the billiard room mimicking and quizzing you to Lord Holmeswell, in the most unhandsome manner."

"A man capable of listening to conversation not intended for him to hear, is quite as capable of misrepresenting it afterwards," observed Reginald, drily.

"It was only in your interests, my dear boy, that he noticed to me the duplicity of these pretended friends," added Mrs. Blair, repenting her indiscretion.

"Docket is a very obliging person, and, I believe, attached to us," said Cressingham haughtily, after a pause; "but the last person in the world to institute himself a judge of anything connected with the habits and manners of the world. If I find him making impertinent remarks upon my friends (for Morton and Holmeswell are my friends,—I may have chosen to see less of them lately, but I have the greatest regard for both), I shall take an early opportunity of requesting him to find some other residence than Stoke."

"I was much to blame to say a syllable to you on the subject," faltered Mrs. Blair. "He spoke confidentially. I had no right to repeat what was intrusted to me. I intreat you, therefore, to think no more on the subject."

In her eagerness to avoid the part of a mischief-maker between Reginald and his guardian, she resolved to seal her lips for the future. Could she have convicted young Percy and his clique of even caricaturing their partial host, upon the attorney's showing, she would have been cautious of disclosing their treachery to her son.

As usual, therefore, in his situation, he was left to rock himself in the happy dream of being an object of intense affection to all surrounding him. With pleasing credulity, he believed that the favoured individuals whom he had so long supplied with horses, dogs, and cigars, cherished for him the same disinterested attachment as those who assured him that his verses were Byronic, and his aspirations as sublime as they were original.

As Mrs. Blair observed, however, the habits derived from this new ascendancy were less prejudicial to his purse, health, and reputation, than those of the *roues*. Both guardian and mother promoted his present refined pursuits,

and applauded the change as a reformation; and whatever Docket gave forth was as religiously echoed by the subordinates of Stoke Paddocks, as a psalm from the singing gallery of Stoke church responded to the giving out of the parish clerk.

Dr. Chaffles, who, as little daring to beset young Cressingham with advice as his former patron, Sir Giles, had invariably crept to The Wilderness with a chapter of lamentations in his pocket the day after Reginald's departure for Eton or Oxford, now appeared with congratulations on the exquisite graces of mind and manners developed in his young friend. It was only little Justina who presumed to express, not to Mrs. Blair, but to Reginald himself, her complete disapproval.

"Grandpapa has given me a pony," said she one day, when they met accidentally in the village. "Some day or other, you must take me out with you. I want you to teach me to leap. Jasper is a frisky little thing, and goes over a grip famously."

It was, perhaps, because unambitious of officiating as esquire to a Dulcinea of twelve years old, that Reginald cooly informed her he had almost given up riding, and had scarcely a saddle horse in his stables.

"Just like you!"—retorted the laughing girl. "You have always begun at the wrong end of everything, and you always will!—When you were a boy and ought to have been playing cricket, nothing would do but horses, nothing but battues! Now you are a man and strong enough to enjoy a sportsman's pleasures, you have turned book-worm. Good by Mr. Cressingham! I wonder whether it will ever suit you to turn a reasonable being!"

More than once did this random and saucy remark of a mere child, recur to the recollection of Reginald Cressingham.

"Well, well! I fancy I am not much more inconsistent than others of my age," was his secret conclusion, after having meditated one day with serious self-reproaches upon his infirmity of purpose. "It is only my power of realizing the whims and fancies conceived by other men that renders my versatility so conspicuous. Tina is right, however. As Voltaire says, people who scorn to enjoy the pleasures of their age, are pretty sure of a double portion of pains!"

## CHAPTER VIII.

Where the red wine-cup floweth, there art thou!
When luxury curtains out the evening sky;
Triumphant mirth sits flush'd upon thy brow,
And ready laughter lurks within thine eye.

MRS. NORTON.

EVEN had Reginald's instances to his mother to become an inmate of his new residence in Hamilton place been of a very eager nature, Mrs. Blair would have resisted. Of an inert disposition, her constitution, enfeebled by early anxieties, had fallen into premature decay. She was now a confirmed invalid—the slave of old Drench the apothecary; who, with wary foresight, assured her that the atmosphere of London would be fatal to her impaired health, and that she could not do better than remain a fixture at Stoke.

But young Cressingham was *not* particularly anxious that she should accept the presidency over his new establishment. He was aware that her habits of life fitted her better for the country; and that his own were incompatible with domestic subservience. Early independence had worked its usual evils. He was capricious, inconsistent, and wayward, and though his natural intelligence rendered him fully conscious of his own caprice, waywardness, and inconsistency, he regarded them as a portion of the pleasures of youth and prosperity allotted to his enjoyment, not as faults to be amended by time.

Though four months were still to elapse previous to the attainment of his majority, he was nearly as much the master of his property as if already of age. The rein was held so lightly by Docket and his mother, that, with the exception of knowing that his accounts were not to be looked over till the ensuing month of August, he had no reason to suppose himself a minor. Money was always forthcoming on his demand;—bills or creditors, never.

It was this, perhaps, which imparted to the nominal fifty thousand a-year of young Cressingham, a value almost ideal. He was spending at the rate of twice that amount, yet experienced no inconvenience from the excess;—till he was

beginning to *feel*, if not to *think* himself in possession of Fortunatus's purse. A sovereign on the throne would scarcely have had a more unlimited command of money.

"What a lucky dog you are, Cress, to have brought up your governor so well!"—observed Sir Henry Morton, who lounged in with Holmeswell to breakfast with Reginald, one fine May morning, in order to inspect his new household, and ascertain what good was to be extracted out of their quondam friend. "My blackguard kept me on bread and water all the time I was at college;—an allowance of eight hundred a year, while *your* people seem to let you do as you like."

"To be sure," observed Lord Holmeswell. "What has the old attorney to gain by thwarting him? *Your* guardian was your nearest of kin. Had you died in your minority, the savings would have gone to *him*."

"That was something, perhaps. But the deuce of it was that instead of keeping them in a floating sum, to grease my wheels at starting in life, my uncle Francis chose to invest them every year in the land. What did I want with more land? To be sure, he improved my income. But what signifies a few hundreds a year, compared with the command of twenty thousand pounds on first entering the world?"

Lord Holmeswell, stinted to an allowance of five hundred a year, sighed at these allusions to thousands of pounds; an aggregation which, for years to come, he was very little likely to compass, unless through the hands of the Jews.

"Ay, ay!—you are both lucky dogs," said he. "If *you* were kept down and kept close as I am, you would no longer wonder at having heard me express my regret at Oxford that men could not be born orphans. By the way, Cress, what has become of Mrs. Blair?"

"My mother spends the season in the country," replied Reginald, gravely. "She is neither young nor gay enough for London life."

"By heavens, I never heard of so exemplary a woman," cried Morton; "you must have had her built on purpose for you! By the way, this Cressingham man, who is going to stand for Wilsbury, must be a nephew of hers, I think?"

"What Cressingham man?"

"They are people with a place near Reading."

"My grandfather lived at Manny Park," observed Reginald, with a rising color, for a thousand painful reminiscences had long caused all mention of the name to cease at Stoke Paddocks; the infirm health of Mrs. Blair having, in fact, originated the shock of learning that the decision in favor of her son's succession to the family property had been the source of loss of reason to her father.

"But surely this young fellow cannot be your uncle?" persisted Morton, not noticing Cressingham's disinclination to talk upon the subject.

"My uncle's son I should imagine. My mother had an only brother, who died young, in some dragoon regiment in India. He left children. A son of his is in the enjoyment, I fancy, of the family estate. I know nothing of any of them. There have been law-suits and family feuds. I was not aware that my cousin was old enough to enter into public life."

"I was staying with Ned Finch, near Wilsbury when Cressingham wrote to canvass him, in the event of a general election."

"Well?"

"The name struck me—and his priggish style of writing still more. I asked if he were a relation of yours; nobody seemed to know more of him than that he had property in Berkshire, and was an out-and-out Tory."

"They all behaved infamously to my mother," said Reginald, "and would have cut my throat could they have done so within limit of the law. I trust we may never meet, that I may be spared the trouble of showing them how thoroughly I despise them."

"Some day or other, you may chance to cough each other down in parliament," observed Holmeswell. "Are you as red-hot a radical as ever?"

"Time enough to trouble myself about politics a year or two hence," replied Cressingham, not choosing perhaps to be catechised by one so ill-qualified for the task of catechisation.

His curiosity, however, was painfully excited by this allusion to a man bearing his name and owning his blood, to whom he was to be as a stranger. Already, Reginald had begun to be alive to the value of connexion in London life.

Notwithstanding the flippant allusions of his gay associates, he saw that those whose families, strengthened by a thousand aristocratic ramifications, formed the ground-work of fashionable society, held a place there unattainable by the mere force of wealth. Wherever Holmeswell and Morton showed their fastidious faces, they were surrounded by their own people. Hands were extended towards *them*, which not even the force of their impertinence could alienate. If unpunctual in their engagements, or ungracious in their allusions, among the Countesses in diamond necklaces, and Lady Helens in garlands of roses, their aunts and cousins, towards whom Cressingham felt compelled to use the ceremonious courtesies of life, there was always an apology for *them*. "It was just like Holmeswell!"—or "it was only Harry's way!"

When Cressingham, on the contrary, entered a room, he felt it to be arrayed in severe judgment against him. No indulgent aunt—no affectionate cousins—no influential kinsman to bespeak indulgence for the new man! With the exception of half-a-dozen young *roues*, who found it convenient to have a monied friend who could mount them and give them dinners at the Clarendon, not one to say "God save him!" and amid the stir and animation of London life, he felt indescribably more lost than in his isolated country house. He was surprised to find himself of so little consequence. Having been taught by Docket to imagine that his Oxford popularity and Stoke Paddocks importance must pursue him into the haunts of the great world, he could scarcely understand how he came to be a grain of sand, though a golden one, in the wilderness.

London is a sad leveller of exorbitant pretensions,—and sturdy must be the self-conceit which can stand out against its millions of battering rams!—In London, no supremacy can be really supreme. Persons of great wealth or eminent birth command a noble position as regards the up-gazing multitude. But to their equals, or all but equals, there infallibly exists some qualifying circumstance of personal defect, or ancestral deterioration, some crack or flaw, some blot, moral or physical, which keeps down undue hauteur and causes the malice of the envious to triumph.

Vain-glorious people should content themselves with the

pomposity of their country seats.—Reginald Cressingham, monarch at the Hall, of all he surveyed, and arbitrary as a Persian Prince, if he did not exactly expect in London the deference tendered to him in his servile neighborhood, was not prepared for the thousand modes in which his boyish vanity would have to suffer.—After all, he was but the "rich Cressingham,"—a well-born man—yet still qualified only by the voice of the world as the "rich Cressingham." —He had no prudence, no pride of place.—A late noble and eccentrece *gourmand* used to say, that the only advantage of being a peer, was being helped first to fish.—There are a thousand similar distinctions to which his lordship's age probably rendered him insensible, but to which Reginald was painfully alive. His rare distinctions of fortune had placed him in a rank of society where it was impossible for him to be foremost; nay, it frequently happened that he was the only man in a dinner-party unprivileged by birth.—He could not help fancying, with the soreness of self-sufficiency, that on such occasions, certain of the young lordships and poor honorables over whom, in every other time and place, his opulence assigned him such high pre-eminence, triumphed in the occasion of seeing him bring up the rear, alone, while they were pairing off with smiling beauties.—Though in all probability his want of social rank never occurred to a single person among those with whom habit rendered such honours a matter of course, he suspected that Holmeswell and Morton, and more especially a certain Gerald Langley, the younger brother of the Earl of Ashleigh, who now represented the former suitor of his mother, delighted in pomposing over his head.

In the latter instance, perhaps, he was not wholly mistaken; for Langley was a striking specimen of the saucy boy engendered by a precocious introduction into London life; and the Earl his brother, an amiable unaffected young man, seemed to have assigned to him, among the other labors of cadetship, that of giving himself airs. Sprightly and malicious, no sooner did he discover the foible of Cressingham, than he paid him off all his old Eton and Oxford grudges, by practising upon his infirmity.

"Believe me, I am most unaffectedly sorry to hear of this disagreeable business," said he, taking Reginald familiarly

by the arm, as they issued from the Opera-house the first night of the season.

"*What* business?" demanded Cressingham, in some surprise—having flattered himself that with Athanasius and his mother at a distance of forty miles, so nauseous a word might be effaced from his vocabulary.

"*What* business?—Oh!—I am very sorry I mentioned it—I did not think it would annoy you."

"I have not the most remote idea of what you are talking," interrupted Reginald, in utter surprise.

"Then we will say no more about the matter."

"Indeed I hope you will, for you leave me in the greatest perplexity," persisted Reginald.

"I mean about this blackballing. Pray forgive me for the allusion. But as a friend——"

"*What* blackballing?—*Who* has been blackballed?" demanded Reginald.

Gerald Langley stopped short, and affected to stare at his companion.

"You seem very much amazed," resumed Cressingham. "Surely you can have no objection to explain yourself?"

"None in the world, if you *really* desire it. The fact is, that the whole house was talking to me of your having been blackballed at the Travellers, and politely declined by the Omnibus."

"The Travellers?—I have not even put up yet at the Travellers! With respect to the Omnibus, as you are aware that I have a box of my own for the season——"

"*That* was considered confirmation of the report. No *young* man, they fancied, would do so tigerish a thing as have a sulky of his own, if he were able to get into either of the Omnibus sets. Somebody consequently reported that you had applied for Harry Gordon's place (who does not return from Naples this season), and that there had been a general veto."

"I should be very glad to discover who has presumed to take so great and unwarrantable a liberty with my name!" Cried Cressingham firing up.

"My dear fellow, when you are a little more used to London, you will discover that everybody takes liberties with everybody's name, particularly with that of a new man;

like yourself. Your splendours have taken people by surprise. They were not prepared for you. Your family not having resided in town——"

"They will find themselves mistaken if they fancy that new to London as I may be, I shall pass over any impertinence of the kind," interrupted Cressingham, earnestly.

"My dear Cress!" interrupted Gerald Langley in his turn—enchanted to find that the young lion was chafed to his satisfaction—"allow me to take the privilege of a friend, and give you a word of advice. Beware how you betray this kind of susceptibility, or you will bring these false rumours actually to pass. Nothing so generally detested as a touchy man. No one in good society troubles himself about the *on dits* of the world. On the contrary, such attacks, like birdpecks on fruit, are accepted as an evidence of personal merit. A man who has no enemy is one who does not deserve to have a friend. Give and take is the order of the day; and unless you can bear badgering, you will do well to go and bury yourself at once at Stoke Meadows, with that attorney fellow of yours, and be toadied from one end of the year to the other——"

"Stoke Paddocks," emended Cressingham, in an under tone.

"Ay—Maddox; I forgot the name of your place,—though I have not forgotten the capital Burgundy you gave us when Ashleigh and I came over to shoot with you at Christmas."

"But what could possibly have given rise to the report that I had been rejected where I never had the least idea of making an application? I know none of the Omnibus set."

"Precisely; which is so singular a thing, that it was naturally supposed you might wish to make your way among them."

"For what purpose, when I can enjoy a box of my own?"

"Oh! oh!—a box of your own compared with the company of the best fellows in town!"

"I have no doubt I might be one of them the very first vacancy," cried Cressingham, beginning to feel dreadfully ashamed of the excellent box for which he had paid five hundred guineas for the season.

"For heaven's sake, don't say *that*," said Gerald ear-

nestly, "or a party will be made against you immediately! The fact is, that neither you nor I could do anything of the kind. There are too many pre-existing claims."

Cressingham flinched at the "you or *I*," assuming a parity of pretensions between himself and Lord Ashleigh's younger brother.

"I am but a boy," added Gerald, perceiving his annoyance." "This is only my second season in town; and I am too much in fear of being snubbed and getting unpopular, to thrust myself into places where I know I am not wanted. As to *you*——"

"Well!—as to *me*?"—demanded Reginald, finding his companion stop short.

"As to *you*, then, since you will have it,—all those fellows about town—but why trouble ourselves about them? Do you think it will rain to-night?"—

"With this frost?—absurd!—What about these fellows, as you call them, about town?"

"Only that I am afraid they are rather shy of you."

"And why pray?"

"Because they have an idea that you are bookish. Your Oxford reputation had the start of you here,—and there was no one to take your part. It is a deuced bad thing for a man who happens not to be at all known, to come out in London with the name of being serious, or a pedant, or a prig, or anything of that kind. Percy of Maudlin, was a regular bookworm, and people were afraid—but it is no use talking about it. I dare say you will do something, some day or other, to convince the world that you are not dunced by too much learning, or starched by too much propriety. Meanwhile, if you never *were* put up at the Travellers, or proposed for the Bus, of course the blackballing story falls to the ground."

Cressingham with a husky voice, now began in his turn to talk of the weather. He was inexpressibly provoked. The vast personal importance ascribed to him by his guardian had not prepared him for slights so wholly unprovoked. He felt convinced that Gerald Langley had not told him all. He was beginning London life with the reputation of being a bore. What was the use of having forty thousand a year, if it did not preserve him from the reputation of being a bore!

"Justina was right!—I am too grave for my age," mused he. "For the last year, I have read too much Reading incapacitates a man for society, and gives him an awkward pre-occupied air, which these people have mistaken for pedantry. They fancy I pride myself on my acquirements,—when, in fact, no man living can think less highly of himself. Well! sooner than pass for a rustic, I suppose I must do at Rome as Romans do."

Now the doings of Romans at Rome, that is, of fashionables in London, though apparently as ostensible as the sun at noonday, were a mystery to Reginald.—He attached too much importance to the outward shows of things. To keep up a splendid establishment in a fashionable quarter of the town, was, he fancied, almost enough. When presented to the families of the Earl of Maunderwell, and a few others of his intimates, he had not the remotest idea how to make himself acceptable among them. His manners were shy, without being diffident; and in trying to conceal his *gauchiere* he often lapsed into ill-breeding; for the moment people cease to be natural, they incur the hazard of becoming vulgar.

He was stung to the quick by the hint thrown out by Gerald Langley, that his personal consequence was not very highly appreciated. The often-repeated lesson of the attorney, to beware of the attentions likely to be forced upon him in the world, as evidence of the evil designs of marrying young ladies and borrowing young men, had prepared him for a very different position. He saw that there was not quite so much occasion as he had expected for placards against trespassers, either on his time or purse. With the exception of obsequious shopkeepers seeking his custom, no one invaded his premises. Nobody proposed to him,—nobody spunged upon him. His dinners were voted a bore by those whose vote was worth having; and his fashionable young friends had horses and cabriolets of their own.

Apprehensive that people scarcely understood the extent of his fortune, he now began to overact his part, with a view of bringing down the plaudits of the galleries;—mounted equipages on a vulgarly brilliant scale, and bought off the French cook of a fashionable club. A dangerous attempt! When it was discovered how many people had been inquiring the name of the man in the park whose harness was

so gorgeous, and it was rumoured by Morton and Langley that, in spite of the merits of the new *chef*, there had been two vacant covers at Cress's last dinner, further whispers arose that "it was a sad pity poor Cress was likely to prove such a failure!"

Like a feeble singer rendering his debility apparent by the exaggeration of his efforts, Reginald, vexed and restless with labouring to put a good face upon the matter, fell into further grimaces. Resolved that his dinners *should* succeed and his house be voted a pleasant one, he invited persons renowned for their agreeability, with whom the extent of his acquaintance did not warrant so great a liberty!

The man who places himself in a position to have his advances rejected by another, becomes his inferior. Two of the leading fashionables of the day were known to have refused Mr. Cressingham's invitations in a tone of supercilious surprise, and from that time, the parasites of fashionable life spoke of him slightingly;—found fault with his taste, and by the scarcely perceptible shrugs and smiles which say so much and so little, begat a general impression that the man whose tastes were thus gaudy, and whose disregard for the conventional forms of society arose from no superiority of genius, must have the instincts if not the condition of a *parvenu*.

"Yes! I believe he is a man of good family. But I know nothing about him. Nobody knows anything about him, was a sufficient sentence of disparagement when uttered at a dandy club, by men without one qualification of intrinsic merit, either of heart or head, to impart value to their condemnation! and inflict humiliation on the condemned!

## CHAPTER IX.

Wouldst thou be singled out by partial Heaven,
The ONE to whom a cloudless lot is given?
Look round the world, and see what fate is there
Which justice can pronounce exempt from care.
HON. MRS. NORTON.

POOR REGINALD!—Poor rich man!—The kindlier qualities of his nature were gradually disappearing. He had been taught Greek, Latin, and French, mathematics and rhetoric. He had been sent to church on Sundays and to school and college the year round. But not one single lesson that really strengthens the understanding, refines the taste, or warms the heart, had ever been imparted; Nurse Adams was the last person who, in his days of dependency, had inculcated precepts of humanity; and those of the attorney had since so effaced that better influence, that his egotism was a mere matter of submission to those in authority over him. His heart had become indurated by maxims of worldly wisdom. If any interestices existed, they were becoming inflated by the puffing up of worldly vanity.

But vanity does not imply self-reliance; and the susceptibility which exposed him to the rubs of the envious was sufficiently galled to render him wretched. Among those by whom his invitations had been rejected, was Lord Ashleigh,—a man who, having nothing to obtain from the addition of a wealthy man to his acquaintance, saw no inducement to throw himself into a circle so uncertain in its composition as that of the rich Cressingham.

The earl belonged to an order of people peculiarly steadfast and regular in their social orbit. The son of a country-gentleman-peer, a rigid conservative, a squire in all but his patent, young Ashleigh had been habituated from early boyhood to see the same faces, and hear the same subjects treated with the same consideration, arising from undeviating principles and firmly-rooted prejudices. Himself both intelligent and enlightened, he was satisfied to take the pleasures of life in an easy way, and the duties of life in an earnest; seeking no excessive excitements,—regarding society as a

gentle and improving relaxation after much study or much business. He was not fond of being startled by the new or strange, but preferred the company of people whose persons and connexions were known to him, to the showy set which lent its forced vivacity or exubreant fashion to the dinner-table in Hamilton Place.

No suspicion, however, would have crossed the mind of Reginald that Lord Ashleigh's plausible excuse of a prior engagement was a supposititious one, but for the bitter in sinuations of Gerald.

'Why didn't you tell me you were going to invite Ashleigh?" said he; "I would have spared you the vexation of——. Oh! he was engaged, he *said* he was engaged did he?—Well, no matter!—But once for all, believe *me*, Ashleigh is quite impracticable. He lives in his own set, with people of his own kind with those antecedents he is familiar. He *won't* mix with strangers!"

Reginald felt his cheeks burn and his ears tingle, but was at a loss for a retort to put an end to the vexatious commentaries of his companion.

"Ashleigh is only to be tempted out of his own circle by a great reputation. I don't mean flashy fellows like Growlingford, or men who trade upon their learning like your friend Percy;—I mean a man promising to be efficiently useful in public life. Our Berkshire neighbor, for instance, your cousin, the clever Cressingham; Ashleigh enjoys nothing better than a *tete-a-tete* dinner with *him* and a dumb waiter in the Albany."

The arrow struck home as it was intended. Reginald saw that his cousin was called the "clever Cressingham" to distinguish him from the "rich Cressingham," and the name of the "rich Cressingham" became hateful to him.

"Lord Ashleigh is perfectly right," said he, affecting a tone of candor. "Nothing so pleasant as a friendly sociable dinner, and I trust no one is more alive to the charm than myself. But I enjoy a sociable dinner *with* a friend. It is only men like Lord Ashleigh with whom I have not an opinion in common, that I ever wished to see *en masse* under my roof, at a set dinner party."

"Ay, but that was precisely where you failed. Had you invited him with men who share his habits and opinions *en*

*masse*, as you describe, he would probably have come. But such fellows as Growlingford!—Such people as Sir Henry Morton and Lord Robert Leigh!—a noisy vulgar fellow like Robert Leigh, who, were he not the son of a Marquis——"

"Well, well,—we will say no more on the subject," interrupted Cressingham, with a heightened color. "Robert Leigh and Morton are my friends. We shall, I trust, survive our disappointment of the honor of Lord Ashleigh's company."

"And the more so as you are sure of my majesty's; who, I flatter myself, am twice as amusing," cried Gerald, trying to laugh off the irritation he had wantonly stirred up. "By the way, there is a cousin of mine always boring me to introduce him to you—Courtfield,—I dare say you know him by sight?"

"Courtfield?" repeated Reginald, looking grave and ignorant,—preparing to decline the acquaintance as some sort of retaliation upon the slight shown him by Lord Ashleigh. "Courtfield?—No,—I know nothing about him."

"I thought you probably knew him, because the Duke of Granton his father, has property in your county."

"The Duke of Granton of course, I know perfectly by sight and reputation," replied Cressingham, at once annoyed and gratified. "I was not aware that his son was in the world. I shall be delighted to make his acquaintance. He is almost a neighbor of mine. Pray invite him to come on Thursday in the place your brother has left vacant."

Gerald bit his lips to conceal a smile; and when Lord Courtfield accompanied him to Cressingham's dinner party, he turned out to be a Westminister boy! For this, however, he did not feel accountable to Cress. It was the business of the host to have been fully aware of the fact.

By one or two more blunders of this description, a ridicule began to be attached to Cressingham's parties. It was said that he had nothing about him but a "pack of boys." Established London men will not compromise themselves by appearing among a "pack of boys." The boys, left to themselves, out-boyed their boyishness; and without the smallest taste for disreputable orgies or vulgar sprees, Reginald found himself more than once disgraced by the consequences of

frolics, which distinguished the "rich Cressingham" from the "clever Cressingham" more disadvantageously than ever.

The newspapers, bribed to discretion, became of course unbribably indiscreet. The young man of fortune was now and then admonished in italics that there was one law in moral England for the rich and for the poor;—and the great world, on finding the handsome young man whose equipages were so gaudy, thus painfully reproved, expressed its fastidious regret that a man of Cressingham's fortune should have fallen into so bad a set.

To be in a bad set, in the world in which it was his weak ambition to shine, is as fatal an imputation as the impress of the branding iron. From almost any other stigma he might have redeemed himself. But for a man to all appearance able to exercise an independent choice to have chosen so ill, could only arise from the instincts of a vulgar taste; few people being magnanimous enough to make allowance for the force of circumstances in the destinies of others.

While Reginald was experiencing these unlooked for mortifications, and discovering that the draught of hyssop is not the less bitter from being quaffed in a golden chalice, Mrs. Blair, in the languid intervals of indisposition, was becoming impatient of his absence, and eager for further insight into his proceedings than could be obtained from notices of his dinner parties in the Morning Post.

But not even from his guardian, could she extract a word of intelligence concerning him whose infancy had been so dear to her, whose boyhood so anxious.

Mrs. Chaffles and one or two other country neighbors, in their occasional morning visits, attempted in vain to vary their inquiries after her aches and pains, real and imaginary, with questions concerning the pleasures of London, and the part taken in them by him whom they considered its leading personage. The gentle invalid had nothing to relate. Reginald's letters made no allusion to balls or drawing rooms. She knew no more of what are called the gaieties of the season, than little Justina. The utmost she was able to report, a mere echo of steward's-room gossip, regarded the extent and splendor of the establishment in Hamilton place.

"I suppose, ma'am, we shall soon be having a lady at the Hall?" was one of the favorite interrogations of the Vicaress.—"Surely so handsome a young man as Mr. Cressingham, and so great a match, will scarcely be let alone by the London chaperons!"

"I trust he will wait. He has plenty of time. My son has seen nothing of the world," was the evasive reply of Mrs. Blair, who did not care to acknowledge how totally she was in the dark as to his projects or predilections. "At present, he can scarcely know his own mind on such subjects."

"He never will know it," murmured Justina, who was turning over the leaves of a gorgeously bound Annual on the table near them, one of the unmeaning, valueless gifts of Reginald to his mother—"because he knows nothing that is not told him by other people."

No one listened—no one replied to the little girl's suggestion; and her elder but less intelligent companions concluded she was muttering words of kindness to the spaniel nestling at her feet.

"To own the truth, my dear ma'am, I was inquiring of Mr. Docket, when he came back from town the other day, what likelihood there was of Mr. Cressingham's settling," added the Vicar's lady, with a half-confidential air. "But not a word could I get out of him!—He could talk only of Mr. Cressingham's French cook, Mr. Cressingham's Opera-box, and Mr. Cressingham's new chariot and curricle. To be sure it *does* seem odd to hear a man of poor Mr. Docket's age and education giving his opinion upon such matters; and quite as much out of the way as my enquiry if there was anything like matrimony in the wind, which made him so angry."

"Mr. Docket considered, perhaps, that during Reginald's minority, the less such things are dwelt upon the better. Besides, however valuable a friend, he is not exactly the confidant a young man like my son would choose on such an occasion."

"Mr. Cressingham is never likely to choose a confidant," again muttered Justina.—"He will always fancy he is choosing, and submit to be chosen. He does not understand the meaning of independence."

Mrs. Blair was not sorry, meanwhile, to perceive that her son's guardian had been as little communicative to others as herself on the chapter of his observations in London. From a certain air of reserve assumed by Athanasius on his return home, she had apprehended that he was in possession of some secret concerning Reginald:—that more had been confided to him than he had authority to relate.

It was not likely that a man so artful as the attorney should admit, either to others or herself, that his visit to the "rich Cressingham" in Hamilton place, was a very different thing from his visits to his ward at Stoke Paddocks; that in London, the power of his wand had departed. At the Hall, Docket was the fountain head of Reginald's pleasures and pursuits. In London, he was only an artful attorney, by whose guardianship the wealthy minor was grievously hampered. Such persons as Lord Robert Leigh and Sir Henry Morton had not been slow in instructing the "rich Cressingham" in the usual ruinous modes of circumventing the authority of a guardian; and Reginald, whose heart was now thoroughly divested of any amiable weakness that might have blinded him to the want of principle of his guardian, now treated him with the disregard sure to arise from disrespect. Conscious that no small portion of his social disadvantages arose from the want of consideration of those in authority over him, he visited upon Docket the slights he was receiving. It was a relief to the evil feelings engendered by the unfair usage of society, to vent upon a self-sufficient inferior the fastidious impertinence he was acquiring in so bad a school.

The attorney had not a foot of ground on which to make a stand against the aggressions of his ward. To obtain an influence over the boy, he had flung aside all pretension to the dignities of virtue, and the young man profited by the frailties thus left exposed. Docket's authority was now nominal. Reginald had learned the secret of obtaining money without his concurrence; and the guardian who, for his own purposes, had been so long indulgent, could not suddenly assume the severe privileges of virtue.

There was consequently covert war between them. Though the same familiarity existed, on the side of Reginald it was tempered by scarcely disguised jeers; while, on

that of the guardian, it assumed the agonised ease with which the keeper at a zoological show thrusts his head into the mouth of the lion, or fondles the paw of the hyena, as an exhibition to strangers.

Cressingham was more amused than he had been during the last few months of noisy orgies or laborious festivities, by the unaffected amazement of Athanasius at the luxurious splendor of his domestic arrangements.

For the last few years, intercourse with fashionable tradesmen had, in some degree, familiarized the attorney with the progress of such matters; and he had consequently affected to give his opinion, if not the law, to his ward. But he was now startled into an admission of utter ignorance. He knew not either by name or nature the innumerable objects of luxury,—the rare wines,—the curious dishes,—paraded before him. To take refuge in disparagement, according to the system of Gerald Langley, was out of the question; nor would he affect to spartanize against effeminacy and enervation, for it was he who, by cultivating such frivolous tastes in Reginald, had striven to entangle him in the golden meshes of his own fortune. But he came back from London to Stoke, irritated and mortified at finding himself of such small account; and the contempt he had ever entertained for the feeble purposes and vacillating mind of his ward began to take the form of dislike. From the first, the interests of Reginald had been secondary to his own; but he no longer cared to what extent the welfare and happiness of the callous young man might be compromised by his prodigality.

"What on earth can this boy mean," was Docket's secret reflection, while riding leisurely, a few days after his return to the Hall, through the fine woods of Stoke, "what on earth can he mean by the sudden interest he is pretending to take in county politics? I have never heard a question from him concerning his influence or interests;—and now, one might fancy he had nothing so much at heart as to stand for the county!—I suspect one of the first acts of his majority will be to get into parliament. He will not be happy till he has made a fool of himself in some public capacity. *He* stand for the county,—*he!* a reed shaken by the wind!—Does he suppose that the county

would submit its interests to the care of a boy without habits of business, of knowledge of men or things?—a boy who spends his days among opera dancers and buffoons,—who pretends only to be a man of pleasure, and does even *that* badly?—No!—they want an active and efficient man, Master Cressingham:—not a jackanapes who, because he scribbles halting verses at the university, fancies himself a man of genius,—or because he boasts of fanciful carriages and a French cook, conceives himself to be a man of fashion. However, I will attend to his injunctions by brushing up to the utmost the Cressingham influence. There will be an opportunity for a speech at the tenant's dinner next week, and I will place a few irons in the fire in other directions. The time may come for turning all this to account."

It was not to Athanasius Docket that Reginald was likely to confide that the motive of his ambition was envy of the growing renown of his cousin Richard. The clever Cressingham had succeeded.—The clever Cressingham had made a hit in parliament; so great a hit, that he was no longer called the "clever Cressingham," but Cressingham only. *He* was *the* Cressingham. When people in society talked of Reginald, it was still as the rich Cressingham for distinction sake; but the name of the other sufficed.

"Yes,—one of the most rising men of the day," they would reply to inquiries concerning the young member;—"a distant relation, I believe, of the Cressingham in Hamilton place, who is said to have cut him out of his fortune rather unhandsomely. The money came from a mutual cousin."

A further slur cast upon Reginald! Indifferent persons are satisfied to take such rumours upon hearsay; and half the world was ready to believe that Cressingham, the member, had been injuriously supplanted by the vulgar fellow who sported the showy *vis-a-vis*.

The impertinent and groundless suggestion of Gerald Langley was now verified. Reginald was *really* blackballed at two fashionable clubs. Of a man less noted, such a circumstance would have been related without exciting much interest or surprise; but for the rich Cressingham to be mortified, was a topic of grand interest for the prattlers of the world of gossip.

To himself, the disappointment was fraught with bitterness. Though he carried his head higher than ever in consequence of his vexation, he would willingly have changed places with one of the popular younger brothers whom he saw courted in society for their family connections or personal charms.

"You have done too much to conciliate these ungrateful people," was Langley's exposition of the business. "Because they saw you in awe of them, they thought they had you hollow. Pray observe that Holmeswell and Morton, in spite of their obligations, have done nothing for you in society."

"I did not want them to do anything for me," retorted Cressingham, at once anxious and afraid to discuss the matter.——

"Oh! yes, you did;—you are not aware of it,—but you *did*. The fact is, you ought to have waited to make your *debut* in town till you were in possession of your fortune; or, if not disposed to remain in eclipse so long, you should have at least come out in the full tide of the season, when a man of your fortune, a perfect stranger, would have been swallowed alive as a *parti* by the ball-giving and match-making women. But to throw off, as you did, before the season began, at a time when you ought not to have been in town at all, unless you were in parliament,—at a time when you should have been at Melton or Paris,—anywhere, in short, but in London, was a sad blunder,—a blunder it required immense tact to get over. You were seen, in the first instance, in a bad set; and such people as Lady Gwenlyn and the Duchess of Penzance could not, of course, take you up after *that*."

"What in the world do I care about such people as Lady Gwenlyn and the Duchess of Penzance?" cried Cressingham, with undisguised indignation. "Fine ladies are my utter abhorrence. I resolved from the first never to put myself up as a target for their impertinence."

"In that case, you are more in the wrong than I fancied," said Langley coolly; for had you insinuated yourself among them, you would have been safe from their attacks. It is only persons out of the pale of their society of whom they ever make a target. You are in much greater danger of being shot at as a foe than as a friend."—

"To a man who does not dance and hates scandal," persisted Reginald, "such parties as those of Lady Gwenlyn and the Duchess are a mere nuisance."

"It is a pity you should *not* dance, however," rejoined Gerald,—"it would have got you on. Besides, since, you *do* go to balls, it would have been better to be seen at the best, instead of starring it among such people as these."

And, with a careless hand, he proceeded to throw over a stand of invitation cards, containing a variety of highly respectable names that were nothing more than highly respectable.

"I have not been to a ball since Easter," said Cressingham sturdily. "I tried the thing, and found it a bore. As to Lady Gwenlyn and the Penzance woman, so little attraction do I find in them that, only yesterday, Holmeswell offered to ask for an invitation to the Duchess's ball to-morrow night, and I declined."

"You did perfectly right," replied Langley gravely. "It would have been disgusting to be refused. I know her list is full, and that nothing would induce her to have people presented to her on such an occasion. It must have been because Holmeswell knew you would decline, that he made the offer."

"He could know no such thing, for it might have suited me to go," replied Reginald fiercely.

"Gerald Langley replied by a provoking smile.

"I bet you a hundred guineas that I go to the Duchess's ball, if I think proper," retorted Cressingham.

"A poor devil like me does not bet in hundreds," was the cool rejoinder of the cool younger brother.

"A pony then?"

"A pound, if you will; but of even that I am unwilling to rob you, for I *know* that the Duchess will refuse."

"We shall see!" said Reginald, satisfied that the heavy obligations of Lord Holmeswell would insure his utmost efforts to secure so simple an object. A total want of the tact arising from fashionable experience, caused him to rate the value of invitations to balls on too level a scale. He did not fully appreciate the difference of importance between one duchess and another. Having refused numberless invitations from persons of the same rank, the possibility of being refused in his turn did not present itself.

He *was* refused. On requesting Holmeswell to press the point with the Duchess, who was a relation of the Maunderwells, he was even pertinaciously refused; and the nature of the bet caused the refusal to transpire. The Duchess had, of course, the best of the story. "She had not the honour of knowing Mr. Cressingham, and having a very large acquaintance, did not wish to increase it." No one blamed her. The Duchess of Penzance was an authority in such matters. The Duchess of Penzance could do no wrong.

Had Reginald been rash enough to adventure *now* a similar application in less distinguished quarters, he would have been equally unsuccessful. The man whom the Duchess of Penzance had refused to know, *must* be a tiger.

So far, however, from renewing his attempts to make himself acceptable to the fine ladies whom he professed to hold in abhorrence. Cressingham affected to laugh off his rejection as the mere matter of a bet, protesting that he had asked for the invitation only for the pleasure of refusing it; and, with boyish levity, he set no bounds upon his sneers at the coterie whose imperceptible barriers had thus successfully kept him at bay. But the usual grounds for such attacks were in *his* case wanting. *He* could not descant upon the venality of match-making mammas; since even the golden key he brandished so ostentatiously, had not availed to open to him the ivory portals of the sanctuary of fashion.

Such was the real position of the rich Cressingham towards the close of his first season in town! So rapidly varied had been the objects of his vain ambition, that he had not yet cast up the sum total of his disappointments. That more solid portion of society over which he had affected superiority, and which enters little into the thin-skinned susceptibilities of fashionable life, *still* regarded him as the fortunate young man in the enjoyment of so fine an estate, who was lamentably squandering it away by anticipation; or descanted at their sober dinner tables upon his service of gold plate, or the costly pictures and horses, in every purchase of which he was said to be so complete a dupe; while the second-rate fashionables were never weary of relating anecdotes of his luxurious habits, and dashing excesses.

His princely establishment was still the marvel of the vulgar. Everything that was rarest in the arts or manufac-

tures was tendered in the first instance to the rich Cressingham. Fruit was forced for him a month sooner than for other people; and not a picture dealer, coach maker, or jeweller wanting a victim, but was sure to cringe his way to the favour of one who felt that it was at least in his power to dazzle;—that if he could not command estimation, he might excite envy and wonder.

With the false judgment created by the influence of money on an uncultivated head and heart, instead of perceiving that mere fortune had not sufficed to insure consideration, he fancied that his failure arose rather from a deficiency of fortune; that he had not done enough; that people expected to see the man of fortune *more* profuse in his habits; and he consequently lavished thousands upon thousands, in pursuit of the roc's egg wanting to his collection,—the gorgeous charm which he fancied would bring the world to his feet.

It was not till the first check of his extravagance, by a difficulty in raising a considerable sum of money, lost at play, which his guardian had declined advancing, that Reginald had began seriously to inquire of himself what advantage or what satisfaction he derived from his showy and disreputable modes of life. It was a rainy day. His magnificent drawing room was quite as cheerless as any other sunless abode on a rainy day. A few hours' solitude produced by the state of the weather, compelled him to reflection. He saw that after the expenditure of a sum more nearly amounting to a hundred and fifty thousand pounds than he cared to own, he had achieved nothing in London, but being bored and laughed at. With all the carriages in his coachhouse, all the horses in the stable, all the books in his library, all the finicalities in his house, he enjoyed himself no more than Gerald Langely, with his one cabriolet, one hack, and a lodging in May Fair;—nay, far less,—for Langely's proceedings were not spied upon, nor his place in society questioned, nor his conduct scoffed at by the Sunday papers.

The philosophy of a narrow heart and narrow mind, did not, of course, reach so far as the discovery that he had scattered his riches like smoke, and nearly to as much purpose; that be had done things to be vain of, nothing to

be proud of; that he had accomplished no great or generous action; and that the egotism generated by excessive riches, is a false appetite, a fiendish craving, which defeats its selfish desires by an inherent incapability of gratification.

"I am only come in for a moment, my dear Cress!" cried Sir Henry Morton, putting a close to his solitary cogitations by a slap on the back, having entered the drawing room unperceived. "It is turning out a fine afternoon. Beaconsfield's drag is at the door. We are on our way to Lord Maunderwell's for Goodwood races, and mean to coach it the first stage. I got him to stop, that I might beg you not to wait dinner for me on Friday, for I scarcely fancy I shall be back in time."

"Goodwood races? Why couldn't you tell me you were going when you accepted my invitation?" inquired Reginald; surmising, and with truth, that he had been purposely kept in the dark, lest he should resent not having been invited to join the party.

"I thought of course, you knew it—I settled it with Holmesmell the day we dined at the Travellers. Oh! by the way, I forgot that you were not with us."

"You are quite aware that I do not belong to the Travellers," said Cressingham, stiffly. "But if you do not wish to keep to your engagement with me on Friday, of course I shall not press it."

"I am taking down Beaconsfield to old Maunderwell's near Goodwood," said Morton, looking somewhat awkward, "and as we have promised to remain there for the race-week it would break up the party if——"

"If you were to adhere to your engagements with *me*, so as not to break up mine," persisted Cressingham, still more angrily.

"Nay, nay,—you totally mistake the matter!" cried Morton, trying to put a good face on his discomfiture. "The truth is, my dear Cress (and I know you are too good-natured to wish to spoil sport)—the truth is that the Maunderwells are wild to catch my friend Beaconsfield for Lady Adelaide; and they could not well have him staying at Maunderwell Court after Holmeswell and I were gone. However, I will throw over the thing with pleasure, if

you have any object in my dining with you that particular day."

Feeling himself now *really* aggrieved, Cressingham affected to be perfectly satisfied with the excuse; and hurried off his friend to the impatient set whose drag was waiting in Piccadilly, attracting the admiring notice of the throng as the neatest turn out of the season, and a credit to the taste of the young Marquis of Beaconsfield, who was driving it in the dress and with the air of that rare anomaly in fashionable nature, a sporting gentleman.

But no sooner had Morton quitted the room, than the repressed ire of his friend burst forth. Lord Beaconsfield was precisely one of the men who had fought shy of his acquaintance; and Holmeswell's sister, Lady Adelaide North, the only girl in London to whom he had felt desirous to render himself acceptable as a suitor. The Earl of Maunderwell was not a wealthy man. An alliance with the heir of Stoke Paddocks was one which he had no pretension to despise; and from the attention she received from the family, Cressingham flattered himself that his attentions were not only perceived, but courted. Albeit his habits of life, for fashion's sake rather than from dissolute propensities, were freer than might have been supposed likely to recommend him to so sober a family as the Maunderwells, he was constantly invited to their house,—constantly welcomed as the intimate associate of Lord Holmeswell; and if he had not actually hazarded his proposals, it was chiefly reluctance to place so proud a man as the Earl in collision with a vulgar fellow like Athanasius Docket, which had determined him to defer the offer of his hand till the attainment of his majority.

But he had reason to suppose that his preference was sufficiently manifest to be protected by Lady Adelaide's brother. He had said a thousand times in Holmeswell's presence that she was the only woman in England whom a man in his senses would choose as a companion for life; and though Holmeswell usually selected the moment of such declarations to settle his cravat in the glass, or adjust his waistcoat, Cressingham found sufficient encouragement in his manner to believe himself acceptable as a brother-in-law!

And now, to be thus treacherously thrown over. A

party at Lord and Lady Maunderwell's for Goodwood races, including all the intimate friends of their son, saving the rich Cressingham, was itself an affront; but a party made expressly by Holmeswell, to give the Marquis of Beaconsfield an opportunity of paying his addresses to Lady Adelaide, was an "ungrateful injury," beyond the reach of patience! Holmeswell, to whom he had lent his money, his horses, his carriages, his dogs, his guns,—Holmeswell, who would not so much as lend him his countenance in return,—Holmeswell was a double-dyed traitor!

Till now, with the irresolution common to feeble characters, he had been uncertain as to the amount of his admiration for Lady Adelaide North. If fully alive to her merits as a well-born, well-bred girl,—admirably brought up and peculiarly qualified to preside over a noble establishment,—with the fastidiousness of a disposition, if not naturally cold, iced by the artificial chill of fashionable life, he had sometimes allowed himself to doubt whether she were pretty enough to do honor to his taste; and whether, in the Penzance and Gwenlyn coterie there might not exist metal more attractive.

But from the moment that he was compelled to regard her as the future Marchioness of Beaconsfield, and wife to the man who had not considered him good enough to dine with, the lovely mortal rose into a divinity.

He had no further hesitation in perceiving that he was desperately and irretrievably in love with Lady Adelaide. It was his passion for *her* that had been the secret cause of his recent langor and ennui. It was *her* presence that had been wanting to complete the attraction of the house wherein so much damask and ebony, and such fine pictures and sculpture, were lavished in vain. It was *her* affection that had been necessary to his happiness. It was *her* influence which, unsuspected by himself, had been gnawing at his heart; and the day of her marriage with Beaconsfield would render him a wretch for life.

The moment a man makes up his mind to admit to himself that he is in love, it is amazing what confirmation he finds in circumstances, previously irrelevant, to strengthen his passion. The preceeding day, he would scarcely have driven his cab so far as the gate of Kensington Gar-

dens for the certainty of a walk there with Lady Maunderwell and Lady Adelaide North. Now that he conceived her on the point of being lost to him for ever, he would willingly have yachted to Egypt for the chance of a meeting.

After a severe struggle with despondency, it occurred to him that an interview might still turn the scale in his favor. There wanted only a month to the attainment of his majority. No obstacle need prevent his offering his hand to Lady Adelaide? and from the graciousness with which she had always received the attentions of her brother's friend, he had good right to infer the possibility of her acceptance. *She* might entertain no projects upon the Marquisate of Beaconsfield, though her parents promoted the match. In fact he owed it to her to give an opportunity of making her election.

But how was this to be effected? To address a letter to the Earl or Countess, in the very teeth of his knowledge of their present views, would have been absurd; to address one to the young lady herself, contrary to the usages of a family so formal. A personal interview was difficult to accomplish, since it was impossible for him to intrude into the house with a party staying in it which he felt he ought to have received an invitation to join.

Goodwood, at least, was neutral ground. There was no reason he should not go down to the races, and take the chance of an opportunity. He had declined two invitations to houses in the neighborhood; one from Sir Giles Snaffle, a man better known on the turf than elsewhere, who had a noisy party staying with him at Bognor;—the other, from Sir Carnaby and Lady Riddlemere, whose family place was at no great distance from Lord Maunderwell's and who, having three daughters to marry, were civil to the rich Cressingham, both on Lord Holmeswell account and his own. To appear at the races, would be an act of ungraciousness towards all these people; and it was only by making it a lark, and going down with Gerald Langley at an early hour on the morrow, as fast as a britschka-and-four would carry them, to return at night, that the thing appeared practicable.—

Practicable it certainly was, as far as money could make

it. Langley, an idle guardsman, was well content to get rid of a vacant day, towards the close of the season, at the expense of Cressingham's company; and unaware of the motives and object of his companion, it was not *his* business to suggest that their sudden appearance unconnected with the parties at Goodwood or in the neighborhood, might appear to require explanation.

The weather, however, in a July previously devoted to St. Swithin, proved so propitious as apparently to justify their exploit, in spite of the early hour at which it had forced them from their pillows; and had not Reginald been feverishly anxious as to the result, he might really have found pleasure in a journey smoothed and accelerated by the spell which rendered *his* journeys all but imperceptible. The two young men enjoyed each other's society as most young men enjoy each other's society on such occasions, by sleeping one half the way, and smoking the other; when, lo! on arriving a few miles from Goodwood, it suddenly occurred to Gerald Langley to exclaim against the strangeness of Cressingham's not being at Maunderwell Court.—

"Holmeswell was aware that I had refused Snaffle and the Riddlemeres," was Reginald's embarrassed reply,—"so that it would have been an idle compliment to ask me."—

"But it would not have been an idle excuse to Sir Giles and the Riddlemeres, if you had been able to say that you were previously engaged to Lord Maunderwell," persisted Langley.—"I don't understand those Maunderwell people. They seem to me to be acting a double part towards you."—

"Or rather no part at all," replied Reginald in a tone of pique. "Their conduct with me has been as simple as mine with them.—I am one of the numerous college friends of their son, and Holmeswell one of mine. Neither of us is all-in-all to the other, and we treat each other accordingly."

"But you certainly don't treat Lady Adelaide as if she were only one of your numerous friends or acquaintances," rejoined Gerald with a smile; "and from something I saw at the Opera on Saturday night, I strongly suspect Holmeswell has been deucedly false in that quarter. I have seen him encourage your attentions to her on a thousand occa-

sions. At that Richmond party last week, for instance, you must recollect that it was he who pushed you into the boat with his mother and sister, when you proposed driving home with Morton.—I was surprised at his conduct at the moment, because I own it seemed to me unlikely that Lord and Lady Maunderwell would ever consent to—however, it is all plain enough now. I am convinced they were playing you off against Beaconsfield, to draw him on."—

Thrown off his guard by his usual susceptibility to taunts of this description, Reginald vehemently protested that Langley was mistaken,—that he had no views upon the hand of Lady Adelaide North, and the Maunderwells none upon that of the Marquis of Beaconsfield.

"With all my heart, since you choose to have it so," cried Gerald,—again taking out his cigar-case, as if determined to close all conversation between them for the remaining few miles. "Indeed I am heartily glad to hear you deny it; for should any one attack me on the subject at Goodwood (as will probably be the case with Lady Adelaide and yourself on the course, and the report so prevalent), I shall answer that I have your own authority for declaring your perfect indifference.

Reginald was puzzled. He saw to what mischief such a protestation on the part of one of his intimates might expose his courtship, and tried to back out of the dilemma.—

"The less said upon such subjects the better!" said he. "Lord and Lady Maunderwell would have every right to be displeased if they found me making gratuitous declarations of indifference to their daughter."

"Since that is the case, I will be as discreet as you please," replied Langley, with a significant smile.—"But if Lady Adelaide North is to have no share in our expedition to-day, may I ask what makes you so much more on the *qui vive* about Goodwood races, this year, than you were about Epsom or Ascot?"

"Ascot perhaps inspired me with a taste for Goodwood," replied Cressingham evasively; for I have one or two heavy bets—In fact, I am beginning to feel a considerable interest in the turf."—

"The deuce you are!"—was Langley's rejoinder; "I am truly sorry to hear it!" added he, a moment afterwards,

with an air of hypocritical sympathy ; "and I beseech you to beware, my dear Cress, how you make such an admission before Snaffle or his set, or you will be snapt up in a mouthful !—To be attempted with safety, the turf requires as steady an education as the church ! You have been brought up out of the line of such things, and at present are not the least fit to be trusted among all those knowing fellows."—

In the act of retorting, Reginald was silenced by a cloud of dust ; and lo ! from a beautiful by-road, overshadowed with lofty elms as if leading towards the gates of some fine seat, emerged a train of carriages containing a joyous, laughing, chatting party, headed by Lady Maunderwell's barouche, in which sat the Countess and her daughter, Morton and Beaconsfield The Marquis placed auspiciously opposite to Lady Adelaide, was bending towards her as they passed ; and a smiling blush avouched the happy intimacy already established between them.

Reginald saw at a glance, even without the malicious interpretation of Langley to guide his observations, that Beaconsfield was a favored, if not an accepted lover. To press his attentions under such circumstances, could only tend to further mortification. He had clearly travelled his sixty miles in vain !

Instead, therefore, of joining the Maunderwell party he attached himself at once to that of Sir Giles Snaffle,—affected the most eager interest in the sport of the day ; and in the dead of night returned to town, stupified by he knew not exactly how many bottles of champagne, to wake the next morning with an excruciating headache, and the agreeable certainty of having paid for his footing on the turf to the amount of he knew not exactly how many thousands of pounds !

## CHAPTER IX.

Faults in the life breed errors in the brain,
And these reciprocally those again.

COWPER.

"LOOK here!" was the first exclamation of Gerald Langley, when they met in the afternoon at Crockford's, the only fashionable club into which, over a bridge of gold, Reginald had made his way. And on examining the paper held out by his officious friend, the first paragraph that met the eye of Cressingham was an announcement of his approaching marriage with Lady Adelaide North; all the usual editorial arabesque of "amiable and accomplished," and "hymeneal altar," being profusely lavished in honour of the nuptials of the Man of Fortune.

"How absurd, but how annoying!" exclaimed Reginald, for once startled into frankness,—"doubly annoying just now, too, when—I wonder what steps I ought to take on such an occasion?"—said he, suddenly interrupting himself.

"None, I should imagine. The best way of dealing with such reports is to let them die as easily as they were born; and you will, at least, enjoy the satisfaction of laughing in your sleeve at the multitude of blockheads by whom you will be pestered with congratulations."

So far, however, of laughing, either openly or inwardly, Reginald was stung to the quick by the good wishes poured in upon him on the occasion. Everybody assured him that they had long perceived his attachment to Lady Adelaide; that they heartily wished him joy of the success of his suit; that it was a choice which did honour to his taste, and that he was about to become the happiest of men. The cruel eligibilities of the match were pointed out with circumstantial persecution. In vain did he deny the soft impeachment; he was assured that such negatives went for nothing. Everybody was resolved to be aware that he was desperately in love; and everybody enchanted that Lady Adelaide North should have consented to reward his attachment. Thoroughly harassed and annoyed, Reginald was beginning to devise some means of terminating the erroneous impres-

sions of his friends, when another formal paragraph took justice into its hands. The Morning Post was "empowered by authority to deny the report of an approaching marriage between Lady Adelaide North and a certain wealthy commoner!"

"Now, as the "wealthy commoner" had given no "authority" for the denial, it was clear that the refutation must proceed from Lord Maunderwell's family; and though privileged to declare the truth on such an occasion, Reginald felt unreasonably sore at the promptitude with which they had flung off the imputation. He fancied that people smiled significantly when they begged his pardon for having been so premature in their felicitations; and was quite certain of the significance of their smiles when, the following week, further "authority" enabled the morning papers to announce that the marriage of "the Marquis of Beaconsfield with the Lady Adelaide North, would take place early in the month of August." *This* time, newspaper intelligence conveyed the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. If anything could have aggravated his irritation at such a moment, it would have been the apparently frank and friendly letter by which Lord Holmeswell announced the approaching event.

"I am sure you will sympathise in Addy's happiness," wrote his obliging and obliged friend. "Beaconsfield has long been the man of her choice; but there have been family objections, which are now happily removed. By the way, my dear Cress, as the period of your coming of age is approaching (when I suppose a general settlement of your affairs is to take place), pray do me the favour to send the mems. of the money you kindly lent me at Oxford, to my father's solicitor, who has orders from him to settle them. I could not remember the exact amount, or would have forwarded a cheque; for the governor is just now in such famous good humour at Addy's marriage, that he has agreed to book up for me. I am consequently almost as happy a dog just now as Beaconsfield, who is over head and ears in love, and appears a capital good fellow."

Though Reginald's bankers had been looking very glum for the last ten days, and had even ventured a slight hint that they would prefer postponing further advances till the

attainment of their constituent's majority should render his signature legal, gladly would he have dispensed with the repayment of the eighteen hundred pounds forwarded to him shortly afterwards by the man of business of the Earl of Maunderwell, and retained Holmeswell in a state of obligation. He saw through the insolence of the case. The man they had injured was to be paid off. All friendship between the parties was at an end !—

In a worldly mind mortification is sure to beget recklessness. Reginald's irritation of soul rendered him desperate, that is, desperately gay, noisy, and prodigal. It was a time of year when few people remain in town but those wedded to the dissipations of the season by undomestic habits; people who adhere to the parks, the clubs, and the opera, after the better frame of society is broken up. Among these, it was easier for the rich Cressingham to obtain notice, than in the soberer congregation of the Maunderwell world; and the orgies of his house, and wildness of his exploits, acquired a still increasing notoriety.

When the gaieties of London were at an end, he was to hurry to the Highlands, where a capital moor had been engaged for him for the season; and Lord Robert Leigh, Gerald Langley, and half a dozen of the noisy boys with whom he delighted to surround himself, had promised to meet him at Loch Maylan, and accompany him back to Stoke for partridge-shooting. In the interim, the attainment of his majority was to be celebrated. But it would be as easy to close his accounts with his guardian in September as in August; and Docket could preside over the tenants' dinner, and superintend the roasting of oxen and ringing of church bells. No other duty occurred to him which might not be performed by deputy. That on such an occasion anything was due to his mother, utterly escaped his recollection.

While Reginald Cressingham accordingly, on pretence of grouse-shooting, was inflaming his blood with whiskey, after losing his money at hazard to the friends who had consented to sacrifice their time to share his expedition to the Highlands, Athanasius was recommending himself to the favour of the neighbourhood by his hospitality, courtesy, and consideration. The tenantry, to whose interests he had ever paid the most scrupulous attention, talked of subscribing for

a piece of plate in his honour; and the cool decision of his conduct on many occasions of county emergency, so favourably contrasting with the feeble indolence of his last patron and the boyish levity of his present, caused more than one gentleman of the county to regret that his kingdom as guardian was about to be taken from him, and that they should shortly have to co-operate with the thriftless young man, whose follies they ascribed to the weak indulgence of his mother rather than to the artful encouragement of his guardian.

The infirm health of Mrs. Blair was a bar to all intercourse with the neighbourhood; and the mutual position of Athanasius and his ward had consequently only been exposed to the observation of a few parties of dissipated young men, not likely to exercise much judgment on the case; who saw in the attorney the most blameless, because the most acquiescent of Mentors. Even the Drench and Chaffles tribe had been so assiduously propitiated by the neighbourly offices of Docket, and so cruelly alienated by the insolent slights of the haughty young man to whom they had shown kindness when a neglected boy, that they were far readier to sympathise with the enormous amount of trouble and anxiety which the dashing ward had occasioned to the excellent guardian, than to surmise what amount of pecuniary advantage might have accrued to the excellent guardian from the follies of his profligate ward.

It was edifying to perceive with what submission Athanasius Docket received the officious advice mumbled into his ears by the old Vicar touching the order of the festivities about to commemorate the coming age of their patron. It might have been supposed that the guardian was purposely proposing an impossible site for the construction of the grates that were to roast the oxen, in order to stand corrected by Dr. Chaffles; and that his arrangements for doles to the poor were intentionally absurd, in order that the Vicar might originate a more appropriate scale.

Even to Drench, he was condescendingly conciliating; the only petition of the family apothecary being that the rejoicings and tumults of the day should be kept as far as possible out of hearing of The Wilderness;—his poor nervous patient being now apothecaried into so deplorable a

condition of body and mind, that her sole anxiety, on occasion of an event for the accomplishment of which her best days had been sacrificed was to escape the noise of platoons and bob-majors !—

With the co-operation of the other "professional advisers of the Cressingham family," Docket took care that the demonstrations usual on such occasions should far exceed even those which had commemorated the close of the law-suit; and there was twice as much shouting, and quite as great an effusion of strong beer, as if the shouters and drinkers had cared a straw whether the young squire were to be hanged on the morrow.

Of all who surveyed the festivities of the day, little Justina alone noticed that the only people who seemed to regard the 28th of August with utter unconcern, were the man to whom it assigned independence for life, and the woman whose only son it invested with the dignities of manhood. It was not for *her* to surmise that the mind of the woman thus pensively secluded from observation, might be wandering back with regret to the time when the babe which that day bestowed upon her, was her only earthly joy; when there was less gilding upon her furniture, but more sunshine in her heart; and that one such whisper as that of the shy, gentle boy on the gaining of their lawsuit,—"Thank God, dearest mother, your troubles are over!"—would have created greater exultation in her bosom than all the congratulations of her neighbours on his imaginary engagement with the daughter of an Earl, or the discharge of cannon that announced his being at full liberty to play the fool.

For though ungifted to argue sagely on the changes wrought in the nature of her son by the hardening sunshine of prosperity, Mrs. Blair was sufficiently observant to perceive how slight her hold upon his affections; that he had learned to consider her rather as one of the trees upon the estate, than as his sole remaining link of union with his kind; that he had not a thought or feeling in common with one whom it was his first duty to love and honor;—and more of her peevish valetudinarianism than the neighborhood supposed, was attributable to the silent consciousness of having a thankless child.

So limited, indeed, was now the intercourse between them

that she was indebted to Docket for information that Reginald was to be at home on the 1st of September, to open the shooting season ; and almost trembled at the idea of his re-appearance at Stoke with uncontrolled freedom of action, backed by companions as reckless, if not as potential as himself.

He came at last ;—and the increased hauteur of his manners, and coarseness of his pleasures indicated that the mother's fears were not altogether groundless. Sanctioned by the encouragement of Lord Robert Leigh, Gerald Langley, and the rest of his *roue* associates, he affected to treat with his ex-guardian as with a pettifogging attorney, a money-lending usurer; and had any but the noisy, witless crew of Reginald's hangers-on witnessed the Shylock-like submission of Athanasius to the contumely of his ward, they would have perceived that there was mischief brewing under so smooth a surface.

The accounts of the wily guardian had passed triumphantly through the hands of the Master in Chancery ; and all that met the eye being sound and reasonable, he had nothing to fear. It only remained for him to obtain a general release from his ward ; who, unable to controvert the evidence of his own signatures of receipt for monies levied in his behalf, and appalled by the terrible array of figures through which he was compelled to wade in the course of the two mornings in which, after hurrying up to town, he was passed, like a brief, from lawyer to lawyer, was right glad to confirm the documents prepared for him, and slink away from the disagreeable consciousness of having forestalled three years' income, and having no one but himself to blame for it!

Disgusted as people are sure to be with the instruments who have ministered to their vices, his only agreeable anticipation on coming of age was that of breaking all further connexion with Docket. Even through the scrupulous obsequiousness of Athanasius, Reginald discerned the dislike engendered by his insolence ? and so far from accusing himself as the originator of a resentment so naturul, sought refuge in the triumph of flinging him off for ever.

The most vindictive monarch, premeditating the dismission of an obnoxious minister, never more eagerly waited

his opportunity than Cressingham for signifying to Athanasius that he was in no further need of his professional services. The man of fortune intended to do an ungracious thing in the most ungracious way. He meant to convey the intimation through his steward by a formal letter, to be delivered to the ex-guardian on his re-appearance at the Hall; and scarcely could he repress the avowal of his intentions when, after executing the formal deed of release upon their private accounts, Athanasius somewhat hurriedly withdrew from his prescnce.

No sooner had Docket left the room than the solicitors in whose hands the deeds were deposited, placed in his own an open letter, which he proceeded mechanically to peruse, as probably connected with the plagues of the day. It contained, however, the formal resignation of Athanasius as man of business to the Cressingham family!—Foreseeing his project, the attorney was beforehand with him!

In no very pleasant temper, therefore, did Cressingham return home, where his visitors had been making merry during his absence. He felt that he had been outwitted; and that coming of age was a less agreeable epoch in a spendthrift's life than the world is apt to esteem it. The hateful evidence of his impoverishment had passed before him phantasmagorically, in the shape of parchments and papers without end; and now he had to confide his misdoings and miscalculations to a new man of business, by whom he should be still further plundered and tormented.

Averse to all moral exertion, he resolved at all events to defer as long as possible the nuisance of developing these perplexities. Bob Leigh and the rest of the party were to remain with him another week, to attack the remainder of his preserve; and on their departure he would return to town, and select a proper person to receive from Docket the family accounts and papers still in his custody.

Hitherto, not a care of this description had been allowed to molest him. At Stoke, everything had passed through the hands of Docket; and unless to sign receipts for the sums provided for his prodigality, he was scarcely in the habit of putting pen to paper. But now, day after day, the post brought down piles of letters from unsatisfied claimants, and demands from money-dealers with whom the re-

cent London season had brought him acquainted, demanding immediate attention, till he began to curse the epoch of independence which rendered him dependent on himself. A succession of importunities and appeals to his honor and sense of justice, compelled him to pay away the whole of the ready money in his banker's hands. Follies to which he had scarcely given a moment's thought in the perpetration, came back to him in the shape of goldsmiths' bills, picture-dealers' accounts, and horse-dealers' promissory notes; and few but those who have had occasion to examine the affairs of a wealthy minor, would give credit to the nature of some of these records of extravagance.

Paid, however, they must be; and ignorant of the nature of his property or the exact mode in which it was hampered Reginald felt ashamed at the idea of commencing his intercourse with his new man of business by a confession of such gross absurdities; and when, shortly afterwards, he was apprised by his steward that the period for the payment of Mrs. Blair's annual allowance had been some days past, and that for weeks to come he should not have in his hands the means of satisfying the demand, Reginald, after exploding into imprecations infinitely terrifying to an old man accustomed to more formal habits of business, began to feel that his rupture with his factotum had been, to say the least, inopportune. Harassed by applicants, who, finding their letters unattended to, came in person to remind him that he was now of age, Reginald gave tokens of the perturbed state of his mind by scarcely concealed impatience of the noisy profligacy of his companions.

"What on earth is the matter with you Cress?" said Gerald Langley, who was the first to take leave, on discovering Reginald's spirits begin to flag. "Is your digestion failing? or are you fretting at not being invited to this famous *battue* at Beaconfield's?—I swear I believe you have never got over Lady Adelaide's marriage! But pluck up, my dear fellow!—One ball in Hamilton Place next season, and you will have all the girls in London at your feet. You can get some one to ask the company for you, and the pretty Marchioness to preside. She owes you *that* after throwing you over so shamefully."

"Still more impertinent were the surmises of Lord Robert Leigh.

"You seem monstrously hipped, old fellow. What has set your teeth on edge? Has Cressingham's clever speech at the Liverpool dinner put your nose out of joint?—or have you been feeling your way with Langley about getting invited to Ashleigh Park for the holidays, where they have resolved not to have you?"

To admit the truth of his situation to associates so devoid of sympathy, was out of the question; and it was no small relief to Reginald when the last of the party took leave, and he was released from their galling interrogations.

His first impulse, on finding himself alone, was to go and spend the evening with his mother. It was very long since he had attempted an evening at The Wilderness; and his conscience smote him as he walked thither across the park, now cheerless with falling leaves and a November fog, towards the little domain once so dear to him, which he had of late shunned as the refuge of all that was depressing.

After the wild excesses of the last eight months, there was something almost preternatural, something that acted on his feelings like a charm, in the aspect of his mother's quiet sitting room, nothing in which had varied by the breadth of a hair during his absence. His morning visits were always as hurried as possible; and little had he anticipated so great a need of human sympathy as now conveyed him to his mother's quiet tea-table for the solace of companionship. At that moment, he was more in want of an affectionate heart, however simple, however ignorant of the world, to be interested in his cares, than of all the wit, wisdom or fashion of fastidious London life.

Mrs. Blair, though unable to abstain from the custom of invalids, of inflicting upon him the prolix details of her sufferings, was silenced the moment she discerned in his absent looks that he had sufferings of his own. A mother's eye is not to be deceived; and the first suspicion that he was unhappy, made him her son again.

But the tenderness of her inquiries rebuked his conscience, and reduced him to silence. Conscious that it was the difficulty of doing justice to a claim of *hers* which at that moment produced his greatest perplexity, he assured her that

he had nothing on his mind,—that the loss of his friends had perhaps put him out of spirits; and he began to talk of London and its gaieties, in a tone of joyousness that might have satisfied anything but the craving of a parent's ear.

"I am sure there is something the matter, dearest Reginald," said she. "You are looking quite ill. I am sadly afraid the gay friends who have been staying with you have led you into excess. Do see Drench to-morrow, my dear son; I am persuaded Drench would be able to set you up again."

"I am rather afraid *not*, mother," retorted he, with a smile, touched by a tone of anxiety to which he was so little accustomed.

"Then I am *sure* you have something on your mind! Some attachment perhaps? I am afraid the marriage of the young lady to whom the newspapers announced your engagement, has vexed you?"

"On the contray, my dear mother, I consider myself fortunate to have escaped offering my hand to a girl who evidently had not a shadow of regard for me."

"Then what can be the matter?" exclaimed Mrs. Blair. "Ah! my dear Reginald, if, rolling in riches as you are, you will still find cause for discontent, who can expect to be happy!—With such a fortune as yours—"

"Even such a fortune as mine may be impaired by such extravagance and ignorance of business as mine," said Reginald hastily.

"Impaired?—*your* fortune impaired?"—retorted Mrs. Blair, with a smile. "You do not know what you are talking of!—Mr. Docket has often told me that your rent-roll will be little less than fifty thousand a-year!"

"My rent-roll, perhaps. But the times are bad. A man is lucky who can reckon on two-thirds of his rent-roll.—If, however, mine were safe in full, I have bespoken it shamefully; and money is not so easily raised as you may fancy."

"Money *raised?*"—repeated Mrs. Blair, who, among the evils she had conjectured for her son, certainly never anticipated deficiency of means—"My dearest Reginald, if you are in any want of money, for goodness' sake apply to the bankers for my half-year's allowance, which must

have been paid in a fortnight ago, and which I have never touched."

Reginald's color rose. The generous promptitude of his mother conveyed a cruel reproof.

"But why allow yourself to be annoyed by such matters, my dear boy?" persisted Mrs. Blair, unwilling, even for the assuagement of her fears, to dwell upon a topic evidently distasteful to Reginald. "Why not refer everything to Docket?—Docket is so ready in every emergency!"—

"Mr. Docket has ceased to act as my agent," was Reginald's cold reply.

"The report was true then! It was mentioned to me by Mrs. Chaffles, but I could not believe it. Oh! my dear Reginald! Docket may not be a man of polished manners, but so old a friend—so faithful a servant of the family—How *could* you dismiss him!"

"My dear mother, he dismissed *me*. Mr. Docket has grown too great a man for business."

"Apply to him, then, for his advice as a friend."

"I suspect he would make no answer to such an appeal. Either he took affront at some imaginary slight; or, aware of the perplexities about to beset me, threw up the tangled skein just at the moment it was getting too involved for him."

Still, however, Mrs. Blair persisted in her entreaties to him to appeal to the counsels of the only man familiar with the nature of his property and resources.

"I agree with you that the fellow is the only man likely to get me out of all these cursed scrapes," said Reginald. "In fact, I am beginning to feel that he is an inevitable evil. But I cannot commit my own dignity by courting him back."

Having succeeded in persuading Reginald, it was easy for his mother to indulge the surliness of his false pride, by extending an olive branch in his name. A letter purporting to bring back Docket to Stoke Paddocks, was instantly indited by Mrs. Blair.

But alas! the missive was unsuccessful.—Mr. Docket was absent from home.—Mr. Docket was gone on business

into Wales.—His servants could give no certain intelligence of his return.

Mrs. Blair persisted, however, in her advice to her son to refrain from intrusting his affairs to the hands of strangers. Docket could not *very* long absent himself.—For a few days, matters might remain as they were.

Little did she suspect to what painful importunities her dear Reginald would be exposed in the interim; little did she imagine how thoroughly Athanasius had calculated and foreseen the consequences of his prolonged absence;—and still less was she prepared for the eager self-gratulation with which her haughty son would hail the arrival of the new travelling carriage which brought back in triumph to the Hall, the man whom, from the moment of his refusing further advances, Cressingham had sworn, in the presence of Lord Robert Leigh and Sir Henry Morton, should never enter the gates of his dwelling after the attainment of his majority!

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## CHAPTER X.

"The vanities that play their part,
Unchecked in every worldly heart,
In the child's breast the spark began,
Grows with his growth, and glares in man."

COTTON.

A CAUSIST might have found means to justify the inconsistency of young Cressingham, on the grounds that the grave gentleman who now accosted him, presented scarcely a grain of affinity with the smirking attorney on whom he had been in the habit of venting his boyish insolence. It would have been utterly impossible for Reginald to take liberties with him *now;* an air of cold defiance on the part of the abdicated potentate, kept his ungrateful ward thoroughly at bay.

Mrs. Blair, indeed, in whose presence the interview took place, could not recover her surprise at the altered demean-

or of the attorney sufficiently to explain the motives of her summons, or the embarrassments of her son ; and even when she flattered herself of having made all clear, so cold and brief was his reply, that she felt under the necessity of recommencing her explanations. Still, Athanasius knit his brows and said nothing. At length, piqued by his impractibility, Reginald took justice into his own hands, and in an off-hand way attempted to place matters in an intelligible light. But even *he* found himself embarrassed by the steadfast self-possession of the man he had offended.

"I fear it will be out of my power to be of use in this emergency. I have, as I had the honor of informing you by letter a month ago, determined to renounce all professional business," was at length his answer. "At my time of life, and a single man, I have no object in increasing the competence for which I have worked so long. I should otherwise have been happy to lend my aid in freeing you from entanglements which I had hoped your confidence in *me*, and my indulgence as a guardian, must have rendered impossible."

Reginald was provoked to find himself looking extremely foolish at this rebuke ; more especially as he had a thousand times promised himself to avail himself of the first opportunity to upbraid his unprincipled guardian with the very indulgence which had laid the foundations of his improvidence. But the pompous serenity of Athanasius imposed upon him.

"As a friend, however,—as an old and valued friend of the family,—let *me* entreat your advice and assistance for Reginald," interposed Mrs. Blair, not hesitating to sacrifice her sense of dignity to the hope of conciliating one whose services were valuable to her son.

Mr. Docket bowed ; not gratefully, however,—scarcely even deferentially ; but as if to acknowledge a tribute lawfully due. Want of head in the mother, and want of heart in the son, relieved him from sentiments of respect or regard such as might have proved an obstacle to the cold-blooded line of conduct he had traced out for himself. He was essential to them, and consequently their master ; and it might be permitted even to a better man to triumph in the con-

sciousness of superiority over those who had beset him with undeserved humiliations.

Even when he consented to overlook, as a friend, the accounts which presented such a Dædalian mystery to the spendthrift, and to suggest such arrangements as might satisfy the more pressing of his claimants, it was with unabated dignity and coldness.

In a fit of folly, arising from irritation of mind at finding himself unable to carry all before him by a stroke of the pen, as during his minority, Reginald had quarrelled with his family banker; and the first step proposed by Docket was to visit London, and adjust this untoward difference with the respectable firm, who had resented the hauteur and ignorance of business of their boy-client.

In the course of a day or two, accordingly, he was able to forward to Reginald a credit sufficient to meet all immediate demands; and while he still declined suggesting the name of a solicitor to undertake the management of the Cressingham property, on the grounds that among Reginald's numerous friends he could be in no want of advisers, he pressed him to make an immediate choice, such as might enable him to surrender the papers in his custody into authorized hands previous to his retirement into Wales; where, in the vicinity of his birth-place, he had purchased a small estate.

All this was a cruel mortification to Reginald. He had never surmised that Docket's services would prove beyond his reach. He had fancied that the attorney was coquetting with *him*, as *he* had coquetted with the attorney. That one whom he had recently regarded as little better than a menial should have achieved independence, while he, the rich Cressingham, was in embarrassed circumstances, appeared a mockery of their relative position!—

In the desperation of his perplexity, he now flung aside even the lion's skin of self-love, and hastened to offer to his ex-guardian terms of preposterous amount, to engage him again in his service. In vain!—The plans of Athanasius were grounded on other calculations. The position to which he aspired in the world was incompatible with any permanent connexion with a man so unstable; and though the rich Cressingham scouted the idea of a man like Athanasius

Docket asserting political opinions of any kind, the new landed proprietor did not hesitate to cite, among the numerous discrepancies between them, the secession of his quondam ward from the wisdom of his ancestors,—the hereditary toryism of Stoke Paddocks.

Again therefore, and in phrase still more dignified than before, did he reiterate his refusal. But this time, his letter contained the disagreeable intelligence that certain reversionary clauses in the will of the late Sir Giles, bequeathing his estates to public charities in the event of the death without issue of his youthful heir, would render it peculiarly difficult to raise money on the property; and that in consideration of the embarrassments already existing, which for years to come must operate a severe diminution of his income, he suggested to Reginald the propriety of reducing his London establishment, selling off his yacht, giving up his villa, and devoting himself exclusively to a country life.

"Unless I am misinformed," wrote Athanasius, "you have found your career in the fashionable world less satisfactory than you expected. Presuming, therefore, upon the privileges of my age, I would suggest that an early marriage, by securing the reversion of your property to offspring of your own, and settling you at once in the tranquil enjoyment of home, might more permanently secure your honour and happiness than persistence in excesses which, I regret to find, have made your name somewhat notorious, and effected a serious injury to your property and prospects."

"Impertinent old puppy!"—was the first outburst of Cressingham's indignation, on receiving this lecture at the hands of the man whom his own weaknesses had elevated so strangely above his head.

"Marry and settle in the country forsooth—ay! probably as *he* is about to do on his Welsh farm!—marry, and become an example to the neighbourhood—edified by the sermons of his friend Chaffles, and fortified by the draughts of his friend Drench!—Bury myself at Stoke, in the hope that the birth of a son may render me master of my estate! I am much obliged to him!"

Released from pecuniary restriction, already were reviving in his heart those impulses of selfishness and mistrust, which had their origin in the predominant influence of his

fate—the influence of Mammon ; and never had he been so impatient of the advice of Docket, as now that it was wise and reasonable. He almost lent an ear to the suggestion of Lord Robert Leigh, who happened to be breakfasting in Hamilton Place when the letter arrived, that he should either horsewhip or call out the man who troubled him with advice instead of assistance.

"For heaven's sake, my dear fellow," cried he, "don't submit to be preached down in this sort of way. If you want a lawyer, I have a capital fellow to recommend to you, who has settled no end of awkward affairs for *me*, and has money at command instead of sermons. Come with me to Gray's Inn, and you will find a man of the world, instead of a sneaking fellow who, after fleecing you to the skin, is the first to turn round upon you. My friend Snapper will take all manner of trouble off your hands ; and it would not much surprise me if he should discover that this impertinent guardian of yours has been feathering his nest famously at your expense."

In the heat of his resentment against Athanasius, accordingly, Reginald hurried with Lord Robert to the capital man of capital who was to steer him into smooth water from the midst of billows and breakers, and whose smiling alacrity certainly presented a most agreeable contrast to the resentful impracticability of Docket. The acquisition of such a client as the rich Cressingham, was the gaining of a prize in the lottery to a bill-discounting lawyer ; and it seemed impossible to welcome him in terms too accommodating, or on knees too bended. Messrs Snapper and Co., in short, undertook everything, made large advances, and promised more ; and within a week after his introduction to them, Reginald was with Bob Leigh at Newmarket, losing more money and signing more bills than even his own improvidence could contemplate without anxiety.

Young Cressingham was now fairly launched in a career which, though it might have witnessed so many wrecks, presents illusions capable of deceiving every new adventurer into a belief that there can be no danger from rocks and shoals known to all navigators, and marked for avoidance in every chart. With the vagueness of perception common to persons on whom exactitude has never been inculcated as

a duty, he kept assuring himself that a man of *his* fortune could afford to exceed; that he might at times experience a want of ready cash; but that, being still the rich Cressingham, it was unnecessary to perplex himself by entering into the petty details of his affairs, which with skilful management must speedily come round. He was not yet reduced to the cruel duty of self-denial.

He accordingly persisted in his habits of lavish expense, and kept a fair face upon the matter. As regarded the world, the great ambition of his superficial nature was to avoid being thought a bore; as regarded himself, to escape being bored. He fancied he must have neglected himself if he felt a moment out of his four-and-twenty hours hang heavy on his hands. The object of a fortune like his, was to provide such a succession of excitements as migh supersede the necessity of thinking, feeling, or becoming cognizant of the commonplaces of life. The grand privilege of the rich Cressingham was to commit all the follies committed by others of his class, on a more extended scale.

Though still smarting under his losses at Newmarket, accordingly he allowed himself to be persuaded by Bob Leigh that there was no existence during the winter months elsewhere than at Melton. He had got tired of hunting at Oxford,—but it was because it *was* hunting at Oxford. Melton was a very different thing; and with the aid of the ever ready "capital fellow in Gray's Inn," he was soon proprietor of one of the costliest hunting stables that ever astonished the annals of Leicestershire. All men of his fortune hunted; and just as, at Oxford, he had been namby-pambyed into affecting polite literature, he was now spurred on to affect sportsmanship, by those who perceived his sensitive anxiety not to fall below the level of a fashionable man of fortune.

With the exception, however, of Mrs. Blair, who, in this new mania of her son found a source of cruel disquietude for her sick room, no one passed a more disagreeable winter than the rich Cressingham. He was an indifferent rider; and his prodigal habits having supplied him with horses of the highest spirit, and in an abundance which not even the abundance of his hangers on could keep in proper exercise, he was constantly exposing himself in the field; and Gerald

Langley having taken care to inform him that Bob Leigh had been heard to declare him the worst seat in Leicestershire, while Morton was known to have whispered that he rode like a tailor, Reginald thought proper to vindicate himself by attempting exploits, the evil issue of one of which laid him on his back for the last two months of the hunting season.

The friends who kindly consented to make use of his horses during his illness instead of comforting his sick room, were not, of course, slow to hint that the accident was no more than might have been expected; that Cress was just as awkward on horseback, as when he was the laughing stock of Ch. Ch.; and the next number of the Sporting Magazine contained, in addition to a piquant account of the Melton disasters of the rich Cressingham, a most free and easy exhortation to him to put himself into training (if he intended to persist in hunting), under hands which might perhaps enable him to ride his own horses.

Reginald was furious. Though scarcely able to crawl about, he began agitating himself in all directions to discover the authors of these attacks,—sport to *them*, but death to *him*;—and before he could be induced to cede to the assurances of Bob Leigh and Langley, to whom his accident had proved so providential, that to fight against this sort of bantering would be to confirm his unpopularity for life, the sporting world found out that the rich Cressingham was a touchy blockhead, who would neither give nor take, and must be badgered into better humour.

It was lucky, perhaps, for Cressingham that his long confinement to his sofa, at the behest of surgeons summoned from town at an immense cost to declare that he would be safer under the care of the medical attendants of the place, afforded to *him* the same welcome relief from the necessity of hunting six days in the week, which a hard frost affords to half the fashionable Meltonians; for, *had* he ridden again, he would probably have seen fit to vindicate himself from the imputation of bad riding, at the risk of his life.

His days, meanwhile, passed heavily enough. His mind was out of tune for even the slight literary recreations in which he had taken refuge from himself after his illness at Oxford; and, though he had dispatched an interdiction to

his mother against coming to nurse him, in terms which an ancient Roman might have thought severe, lest a maternal visit should expose him to the ridicule of his sporting friends before the sixth week of his confinement was at an end, it occurred to him more than once to sigh for home, and to wish that his affectionate friends were not quite so keen in the field all the morning, or quite so noisy over their claret at night. He knew, however, that he should be equally neglected elsewhere. Bob Leigh, Morton, Holmeswell, Langley, all his London associates, were at Melton. There was nothing to be gained by a removal to Hamilton Place.

The position of his affairs was not calculated to brighten his hours of sickness. So far from being able to detect a flaw in the accounts surrendered by Docket, Snapper and Co. were forced to admit, nay, almost to admire, their professional regularity ; nor was it compatible with their own position relative to their young client to indulge in diatribes upon the culpability of the guardian, who had not forcibly restrained the premature extravagance of his ward.

Ashamed, perhaps, of falling so far short of their undertakings in this particular, they made new show of zeal by suggesting, after due examination of the preposterous claims against him, resistance against the keeper of a Brighton hotel, where the rich Cressingham had thought it good for his health to retain apartments twelve months in the year, which he visited occasionally for a week ; and, though the nature of the charges in the disputed bill was such as to excite roars of laughter in court, the skilful cross-examination of the plaintiff's attorney brought to light such gross acts of folly and extravagance on the part of the young gentleman, who now refused to pay eleven guineas for a dish of pine-apple fritters, that all the world agreed it would have been worth Reginald's while to throw away thrice the amount of the sum claimed, rather than incur for life the stigma of such an exposure.

No sooner had the press laid hold of the affair, as a fertile source of profitable abuse and witty inuendoes, than the friends previously eager in their advice to him "not to be *done* by a rascally innkeeper," whisper in all directions, that "It was a pity a man of Cress's fortune had not thrown the money into the fellow's face, and said nothing more about

the matter, and a sad mistake to have allowed himself to be so shown up:—the name of 'Pine-apple fritters Cressingham' being likely to stick to him for life!"

Unluckily, it stuck to him in a time and place where his credit as a reasonable being was more than usually important. During his confinement at Melton, one of the many sources of bitterness by which he had striven to make the solitude to which he was assigned by fashionable friendship as irksome as possible, was the newspaper reputation of the "clever Cressingham." A great political crisis was at hand; and Reginald seemed to interest himself in parliamentary debates, chiefly for the purpose of studying, period by period, cheer by cheer, the reports of his speeches, as if bent upon discovering the secret of his cousin's eloquence. It seemed hard, indeed, that a man educated in obscurity, who had passed through college without notice, should have thus suddenly blossomed into fame.

Recalling to mind the praise lavished upon his own efforts at the spouting club by Percy and other worshippers of his literary aurora borealis, he felt satisfied that opportunity alone was wanting to place the name of another Cressingham in the muster roll of fame. Withdrawn for a time from the noisy orgies of his dissolute companions, he began to perceive that he had been unconsciously, if not reluctantly, drawn into the vortex; and flattered himself that because the contemptible sphere in which he had sought a level afforded him no real enjoyment, he possessed aptitude for higher things; and determined to buy his way into parliament, where nature would do the rest.

Not even the repeated disappointments and personal thwartings which might have been expected to modify his confidence in the royal road to learning, or golden road to success,—could inspire Reginald with wisdom. He still imagined that gold would buy golden opinions; and that the rich Cressingham need only avow the pretensions of being called the clever Cressingham to achieve a great reputation.

It was his own fault if he had failed in minor pretensions. He might have been blackballed at White's by the malice of envious younger brothers; rejected by the patronesses of Almack's, whose daughters he had not chosen to invite to dance; quizzed at the moors as a bad shot, and at Melton

as a bad seat, or vilified by the Sunday papers as a stingy fellow after the expenditure of two hundred thousand pounds; but it was only because, to achieve such trifles, he had not chosen to apply the full force of his faculties. And if, after compassing his entrance into the House, he thought proper to get up the steam and attain parliamentary distinction, he entertained little doubt that the new clever Cressingham would very shortly eclipse the old.

These ambitions, and the irritability arising from their neglect of his sick room during the hunting season, produced inevitable estrangement between Reginald and his noisy associates. Unaccustomed to self-restraint, he allowed his disgust to become sufficiently apparent. The state of his health forbad all possibility of a renewal in Hamilton Place of the intemperate orgies of his hunting box; and no sooner had he declared his intention of dispensing with an opera box,—giving up his team,—disposing of his villa, and renouncing divers other expensive superfluities of dandy life, than Bob Leigh began to whisper at Crockford's, that, after all, he was afraid he had been mistaken in Cress;—that Cress was not the right good fellow he had fancied; that Cress had a knack of always thinking himself imposed upon;—that Cress would never make, or, at all events, never keep a friend; and all this because Cress was of opinion that he had been "keeping" his friends long enough, and that it was time he should think of himself—nay, even think for others!

For, lo! the general election so long anticipated was at hand; and placards of "CRESSINGHAM, THE FRIEND OF THE PEOPLE," already clothed all the blank walls within forty miles of Stoke Paddocks!

## CHAPTER XI.

In politics pray let's be staunch,
Arm'd cap-a-pie against the French,—
Abstain from plots, and only drive at
The public welfare or our private.
For England's sacred glory try
Turks, Jews, and Jesuits to defy,
And keep our places till we die.

PRIOR.

"I AM sure I don't know any one who has a better right to represent the county than a young man of my son's property," was Mrs. Blair's rejoinder to the lamentations of Mrs. Chaffles, by whom the first intimation of his intentions was brought to The Wilderness.

"But, my dear ma'am—such a county as *this!*" persisted the Vicar's lady. "So very young a man to attempt a contest with our old and venerated members! In the teeth, too, of the long established Conservative principles of the Cressingham family."

"My son has no such close relationship to his predecessors as to bind him to their political principles in opposition to his conscience,"—retorted Mrs. Blair.

"*His conscience!*" murmured Justina, who had accompanied her grandmother.

"And as to Conservatism, the very name is scarcely ten years old," added Mrs. Blair, resenting anything that sounded like an imputation upon her son.

"Oh! certainly, ma'am—certainly. Far be it from me to find any fault with Mr. Cressingham for asserting his independence. Only, between ourselves, the Doctor is greatly distressed at foreseeing the vast sum of money about to be expended by his young patron,—and the defeat certain to ensue."

"But why certain to ensue?"—demanded Mrs. Blair, in a nervous tone.

"Because Mr. Cressingham has put forward addresses at variance with the interests of the county and with his own. Was not that what Mr. Drench was saying at our

house this morning, grandmamma?" observed the young girl.

"Don't talk about what you don't understand, Tina," said the old lady; while Mrs. Blair murmured, in a tremulous voice—"Why, certainly, if Mr. Drench is of opinion that Reginald has acted rashly, I fear it is all over with him. I dare say Drench was afraid of hazarding his real opinion to *me*. He certainly seemed to insinuate yesterday that it was impossible to guess the result of the poll."

"You see, my dear ma'ma," rejoined Mrs. Chaffles, cheered by the growing despondency of the invalid, "both Mr. Drench and the Doctor are placed in a most painful and embarrassing situation by Mr. Cressingham's manifestation of opinion. Mr. Cressingham has certainly a right to count to the utmost upon their support in his canvass. But just consider what a figure they will cut!—All the folks, gentle or simple, in these parts, are out and out Tories. Sir Giles Cressingham, ma'am, was a stiff Tory,—Mr. Docket, ma'am, was a stiff Tory; and the poor dear Doctor has been preaching and praying for the good cause for the last eight-and-thirty years. At all the tenants' dinners, at every meeting at Stoke,—in private and in public, ma'am,—assizes, bible-meetings, races, and what not,—wherever there was a speech to be made, it was made in favor of Church and State. And now to have to go and swallow these words will, at the Doctor's age more particularly, be exceedingly disagreeable."

"But why is grandpapa to swallow his words?" demanded Justina. "Mr. Cressingham's addresses talk of nothing but civil and religious liberty all over the globe. He cannot want grandpapa to make a slave of himself because he happens to be patron of the living of which he is the incumbent."

"Nonsense, nonsense!" interrupted her grandmother.—"You don't suppose that the Doctor intends to run counter to the interests of the family to which he has been attached for eight-and-thirty years?—No, my dear!—Your grandpapa is a man of higher principles! Only he feels his situation to be a delicate one; and is, of course, impatient that Mr. Cressingham should make his appearance to give him instructions about putting out the addresses. The London

solicitors did not even pay the Doctor the compliment of consulting him about the deputation that was got up to solicit Mr. Cressingham to stand."—

But though the old Vicar, now nearly in his dotage, was willing to accept proprietorship of Stoke Paddocks as sufficient evidence of fitness to be the county representative, less enlightened men were less persuadable.—It may be an advantage in a ballot at a fashionable club for the aspirant to be little known, so as to excite neither envy or malice; but, in the case of a county member, it was held essential by its leading gentlemen that something more should be apparent in their future representative than the extent of his estates. A certain number of men of liberal opinions, indeed, impatient of the subjection in which the county had long been held, voted for Reginald rather as a notification of their own opposition than with any desire for his success; and, in the sequel, all that money could effect was attempted in vain, in order to bring him within even respectable distance of the men he was desirous of unseating.

Even among the people, a saucy cry arose of "Who *is* Cressingham of Stoke Paddocks?" They all knew Stoke Paddocks—they none of them knew Cressingham; nay, they none of them wanted to know him. He was a man who drew his income from the county, and spent it in London. He was a man whose name was unconnected with county charities or county improvements. He had done nothing for them—he probably *would* do nothing. He was not even born among them. He was not a true Cressingham. He was a changeling,—an alien,—a nobody.

As the polling proceeded, and the money scattered by Messrs Snapper and Co. as lavishly as if it had not cost fifteen per cent. in the raising, excited momentary uneasiness in his opponents, other civilities besides rotten eggs and dead cats were flung in the face of the indignant Reginald.

"Who ate the pine-apple fritters and then refused to pay for them?—CRESSINGHAM the fubble!" was paraded on sundry placards before his flashing eyes.

"Who pays his French cook the maintenance of sixteen poor families?"—was another of the queries addressed to him; and by degrees a thousand anecdotes of his dissolute

and prodigal career evoked the hooting and execrations of the fickle throng.

But this was not the worst. Though deeply mortified at finding himself indifferently supported by the county gentlemen of liberal opinions,—though enraged at being called to account for his pleasures and pursuits, the thing that touched him most was the absence of a considerable number of his more respectable tenants from the mounted procession got up in his honour. *They* chose to be steadfast in their opinions. *They* had no clever cousin in the House, on the Tory interest, to pique them into opposition. The honourable member for Wilsbury was nothing to *them*; and to the utter mortification of the poor old Vicar, a considerable number declined giving their votes to their landlord. A few, from motives of respect, abstained from voting at all; but it was observed that all those who had subscribed for the piece of plate for Athanasius Docket, which had given such offence to his ward, presumed to record their votes against "CRESSINGHAM the friend of the people," albeit proprietor of Stoke Paddocks.

It was a stormy contest. The supporters retained by the emissaries of Messrs. Snapper and Co., were far short of the most respectable condition; and an affray that signalized the course of the second day's poll ended in a loss of life, which added new blackness to the evil renown of the junior candidate.

The young gentleman "who ate the pine-apple fritters and then refused to pay for them," was made accountable for all; nay, even the liberal party affected to consider that young Cressingham had injured their cause by making *his* unpopularity and incompetency pass for the weakness of their party. Deeply mortified by the revival of the pine-apple fritters affair, he had made an indifferent speech, and was felt to have broken down on the hustings; and when, at the close of the contest, he became aware that he had expended six thousand pounds for the simple pleasure of being pelted, vilified, and pronounced incompetent by all sides of the question, he had, indeed, some cause to wish that his first flight in public life had been of a less aspiring nature.

Respectability was the word which had been most ad-

vantageously arrayed against him. The respectability of the old members, the respectability of the conservative cause, the respectability of his predecessors at Stoke Paddocks, the respectability even of the Tory guardian who had retired in disgust from the management of his affairs, were cited in black, white, and grey, in contra distinction to all that *he* had ever done at Oxford, Melton, London, or left *un*done at Stoke Paddocks. And all this in presence of the Duke of Granton and Lord Ashleigh, who had proposed one of the sitting members; to say nothing of the Marquis of Beaconsfield, who was nephew to the other;—"Earl Percy saw his fall."

In town, the news of his defeat excited no surprise. The Reform Club had not judged its support necessary to the rich Cressingham, who pretended to stand forth as champion of their cause; and at Crockford's and elsewhere, where politics excite about the same interest as any other game at hazard, scarcely a man had been found to back "poor Cress" with a bet. His young contemporaries had long decided that in all his undertakings "Cress would put his foot into it."

One of the unkindest cuts of all hazarded against him on the hustings was, that in spite of the extent of his rent-roll, the rich Cressingham was in difficulties such as rendered a seat in parliament peculiarly desirable; nor was his resentment of the imputation diminished when he had grounds to surmise that intelligence of the derangement of his affairs had been circulated by the personal friends of his ex-guardian. That Docket should consider it worth while to cabal for the political interests of a county from which he had retired forever, and with such flying colours, appeared, indeed, scarcely probable; and though Messrs Snapper and Co., by whom the chain of evidence was traced link by link, protested that the assistance afforded by the extensive personal influence of Athanasius to the conservative cause, was a mere repayment of the sterling aid of the Carltonians, which had caused him,—*him*, the attorney,—*him*, the rebuffed of the rich Cressingham—to be returned by the worthy and independent electors of Llanstephen, the borough immediately adjoining the seat in Wales which he had modestly termed a farm, Reginald could scarcely believe in so deeply laid a scheme of political intrigue.

The result, at least, was indisputable. Athanasius Docket was returned to Parliament, and Reginald signally defeated. Athanasius was now his superior. Athanasius was in a position to achieve the laurels by which he had hoped to out-triumph the honourable member for Wilsbury!

Under this new mortification, to whom was he to turn for sympathy? Messrs Snapper and Co., who had earnestly dissuaded him from a contest, to provide the funds for which they had been forced to ruinous extremities, now shook their heads despairingly, if not rebukingly; while poor old Chaffles found himself too bitterly upbraided with his apostasy by his clerical brethren and Tory neighbours, to find the election a pleasant topic for discussion. Nay, he almost dreaded the idea of entering his pulpit, lest peradventure the grim visage of his patron, Sir Giles, should thrust itself forth from the family vault, to revile him for desertion of the sacred banner.

Reginald was consequently alone in his sullenness. On proceeding from Stoke Paddocks to the election, so sanguine were his expectations of triumph, so earnest his reliance on the potency of the golden charm, upon which, from his youth upwards, he had been taught to rely, that he had all but bespoken festivities to signalise his return to Parliament; and it struck him, as his travelling carriage re-entered the park, that he discerned traces of the recent removal of a wooden framework purporting to form the foundation of a triumphal arch; and though the head gardener protested that certain stupendous faggots of laurels which he found tied up in the shrubberies, had been prepared to grace the carriages conveying voters to the poll, Reginald had only too shrewd a guess at their real destination.

It was summer time. A glorious sunset was brightening the scene, over which the disappointed man cast his eyes in disgust. While waiting for the dinner bell, instead of proceeding to The Wilderness to visit his mother, according to his wont when he had nothing else to do, by some inexplicable force of sympathy he betook himself to the shade of the beech-tree under which it was the custom aforetime of Sir Giles Cressingham to sit and muse, when equally out of sorts with the world; and, as if influenced by some local spell, his moody thoughts gradually concentrated themselves

into a most Cressinghamian thirst for revenge. Baffled in his dearest ambition, his ears still tingling, and his heart still smarting, under the buffets and insults he had endured, the man of fortune was not long in finding objects whereon to exhaust his vengeance. The following day, notices of ejectment were served by his steward upon the refractory tenants who had withheld their support from their landlord; and the following week, the County Chronicle, supported by the money and influence of the Duke of Granton and the Earl of Ashleigh, contained a bitter article upon the tyranny of the self-styled Liberal candidate, which the Conservative press judged worthy of being transferred to the London papers.

A contest in which the interests of the people had scarcely the shadow of a share,—a contest originating, on one side, in love of notoriety, and, on the other, in love of place,—was now made the groundwork of a series of splendid bursts of newspaper eloquence; in the course of which the word FREEDOM, repeated nine hundred and ninety-nine times, produced the necessity for increasing the printer's supply of upper-case F's, and the burning in effigy of the rich Cressingham, or, as he was now termed, the tyrant of Stoke Paddocks, in his county town, and divers villages and hamlets attached to the Granton interest, and consequently peculiarly conservative;—which, had *they* presumed to vote against the Duke of Granton's member, would have undergone precisely the same sentence as the recalcitrants of Stoke.

Meanwhile, finding himself braved and threatened on his own territories, Reginald renounced his intention of quitting home for a time, and stood his ground manfully at the Hall for the cultivation of his disgusts! There was no one whom, under circumstances so disagreeable, he could invite to bear him company; and, with the exception of unacceptable letters by the post, no change or incident enlivened his solitary days. It was a desolate season for a man who discerns no charm in the aspect of nature. There was no shooting,—no hunting,—and the rich man had neither simplicity nor philosophy to qualify him for a brother of the angle. The country was consequently detestable. The woods were green,—the fields glorious,—the gardens bright with flow-

ers. Harmonious sounds and sights abounded on every side;—but there was a deficiency of all which, to persons wedded to the artificialities of society, constitutes the charm of country life. There was too much sunshine of a morning,—to much daylight of an evening; and Cressingham consequently found his beautiful place utterly insupportable. Nearly ten years had elapsed since, on coming into possession, the Hall was placed in complete order; and, compared with the luxuriousness of his over-furnished town mansion, it now seemed dingy and old-fashioned. He was weary of everything around him. Unattached to the place by early associations, all became a blank when compelled to trust for enjoyment to its resources.

Moreover, there is something that weighs like lead upon the spirits in the routine of a noble establishment, when the proprietors know that though its splendours proceed as if by mechanism, the master spring is every moment in hazard of breaking. The same number of servants in the household, the same quantity of plate on the table,—the same banquet, the same illumination;—yet ruin silently and invisibly hovering over all!

The tyrant of Stoke Paddocks began to fancy that he discerned significant smiles upon the faces of his attendants; that they peered into the contents of his disagreeable letters, that they perused the newspapers which vilified his character; that they were laughing in the servants' hall and steward's room over the caricatures of Pine Apple Fritters Cressingham and the strictures of the press. In vain did he betake himself to a dumb-waiter to get rid of their attendance. He could not ring the bell without feeling that they had the advantage over him; and was forced to confess that if no man can be a hero to his *valet-de-chambre*, there is no difficulty in being a coward.

Mrs. Blair, when he sauntered occasionally into her close room to find fault with the atmosphere, and wonder at the patience of little Justina, who devoted a portion of every day to comfort and read to the invalid to whom she was indebted for many a serious act of kindness, noticed with regret that his countenance was beginning to be worn with the premature cares of life. But she had not courage to attempt

to obtain his confidence. It was only her young companion who ventured openly to attack him.

"How wrong you are to come and make your mother anxious by your long face, Mr. Cressingham!" said the fearless girl one day, when he overtook her in the park, on her way to visit The Wilderness.—"In her lonely room Mrs. Blair has nothing to do, after you are gone, but suggest causes for your being so out of humor. She fancies you crossed in love;—she fancies you ill—unhappy—a thousand things; instead of simply perceiving that you are disappointed in not finding yourself so great a man as you expected."

"I thank you!" replied Reginald, in a bitter tone;—"I sincerely thank you."

"Yes, *do* thank me,—you are quite right to thank me,—for I am the only person who dare tell you a little wholesome truth. If other people had given you as much cause to thank them for plain speaking, you would not be moping alone here at Stoke, accomplishing no good purpose, boring every one as much as you are bored yourself."

"So far from being bored,—" Reginald was beginning,—

"Do not deny it!" interrupted his little friend. "You do not derive one particle of pleasure from the place which strangers cannot pass on the road without admiration. When we were children here, you were as fond of it as I was. As its master, you see in the estate only a place where timber may be cut down to defray your London expenses. What has become of Annesley hanger, where I used to find the first violets every spring?—Gone!—What has become of the woodlands which used to clothe yonder naked hill, above Upham? Upon my word I do not wonder at your disliking a spot so fraught with disagreeable reproaches!"

"I dislike a place where there is no society,—no neighborhood," said Reginald, nettled by her presumption. "Who is there at Stoke, pray, with whom a gentleman can associate?"

"With your fortune, you should secure gentlemanly associates in you own house. Where are your friends?—Where are even your companions?—such companions as they *were*

—when you *did* think proper to fill the old Hall with company!"

"What temptation could I offer to people of the world to come and stay with me? Not a creature within ten miles round whom I could invite to meet them!"

"There is the Duke of Grauton's family at Haxington, and Lord Beaconsfield only a few miles further, who will fill *their* houses from a much greater distance," replied Justina, coolly. "As to the immediate neighborhood, if it boast of no *very* fine people to do you honor, you have done nothing to improve its sociability; for our little circle—a circle that satisfied *us*—is broken up by the discords of the late contest, which has done nothing but spend your money, make *you* ridiculous, and my poor old grandfather—but of *that* I must not allow myself to speak."

"You seem to allow yourself to speak of most things with very little ceremony, Justina," said Reginald, less angrily than might have been expected.

"To *you*,—because you will never be more to *me* than when we were playmates. Had you grown up into the great man we all expected, perhaps I might have learnt to forget I had known you as a good-natured boy. As it is, I sincerely pity you, Mr. Cressingham; for I look upon a man like you, blest with the power of doing so much good in the world and doing none, even to yourself, to be as great a criminal as many who are on the treadmill."

This boldness on the part of one whom he had dearly loved as a child, but whom his worldly eye now regarded only as the humble companion of his mother,—whose business it was to wind worsted, ring for coals, and hold her tongue,—effected nothing for Reginald but to keep him away from The Wilderness. Conscious of the truth of Justina's accusation that he never made the smallest sacrifice to his mother's happiness or comfort, he amended the matter by absenting himself altogether.

The truant gained nothing in peace of mind, however, by his removal to town. Though the expedience of his men of expedients had arranged such terms with his creditors as relieved him from immediate anxiety, his mind was not quite so secure as his person. The evil day of general settlement, though deferred, could not be deferred for ever; and between the im-

pertinent taunt of little Justina, "if you want companionship at Stoke, why not look out for a wife?" and the grave hint of Snapper, "if you want fifty thousand pounds, why not look out for an heiress?"—he felt at times almost disposed to exchange the noble jointure conveyed by the Stoke Paddocks title-deeds, for a hundred thousand pounds, or so, in the way of dowry.

Heiresses are seldom wanting in money making London, more particularly in those secondary circles with which he had been scoffed by Gerald Langley for making himself familiar; and he remembered having presented his friend, Lord Robert, with malice prepense, to the only daughter of a rich brewer, who was said to be eager to connect his overgrown inheritance with the empty title of ladyship. She was an ugly girl, if he recollected rightly—but what then? —In the choice of an heiress, people must not be too fastidious. Provided the gilding be thick enough, it will cover any amount of defect or infirmity, personal or ancestral. The young lady in question, however, was what is called "not so *very* ill-looking for an heiress." There was nothing absolutely loathsome in her features—nothing positively repellent in her figure; and Reginald, more at his ease in the circles of Portland Place than in that of the Dutchess of Penzance, did not find the courtship to which shortly afterwards he addressed himself, half so irksome as Lord Robert Leigh, who, seeming to plead privilege of peerage to "come, see, and conquer," had incurred as rapid a defeat.

Had the fashionable season been in progress, Reginald might, perhaps, have experienced more reluctance. But the great world was in its country houses; the *roue* world in its hunting boxes; and London given up to the sobriety of family coaches and parties to the play. Not a coronet was astir to distract the vain mind of the spendthrift from its purpose; and day after day did he submit with decreasing disgust to the operation of morning visits to the work-table of Miss Florence Worts.

That a young man like the rich Cressingham, handsome in his person, choice in his dress, familiar with the light literature of the day, and pleasant enough in his manners when he felt at ease, should prove a welcome visitor, was

only natural. Of the numerous pretendants, past and present, to the hand of the heiress, Reginald was certainly the most distinguished; nor was he slow to remark that his arrival was always greeted with a smile, and that significant looks were exchanged as he entered the room between the fair Florence and a certain Miss Pettigrew, ex-governess and toady regnant, who officiated as her chaperon. The influence of the favor he thus enjoyed was remarkable; and the guest, so awkward and silent at Maunderwell House, became graceful and eloquent in Portland Place.

He could not help feeling, however, that Florence was somewhat relentless in her inflictions of vulgar uncles and cousins upon his acquaintance. He had found himself compelled to acknowledge, within hail of Crockford's windows, the bow of a Mr. Bartholomew Worts, a wholesale druggist in Lothbury; and to endure the hand-kissing of a blue coachful of Misses Worts, of Bedford Square, who, on more than one occasion, fairly drove him out of the Park.

But such sacrifices were not to be put in competition with a hundred thousand pounds in hand, and three hundred thousand in the bush. The free use of money had taught him the value of money; and he accordingly redoubled in attentions, even while the Christmas dinner parties of the Worts family were monopolizing whole cartloads of turkeys and chines. He was not apprehensive, on *this* occasion, of premature disclosures in the Morning Post. Burrowed in the hyperborean circles of Portland Place, he defied even the most acute terriers of the fashionable world.

Time drew on, and the well applied spur and thong of his knowing friend in Gray's Inn, at length brought Reginald to the proposing post. By degrees, he had become personally desirous of the match. With very little tutoring, and the aid of the Cressingham diamonds, he fancied that Florence would preside with honor over his establishment in Hamilton Place. Clever and lively, her conversation amused him; and he began to fancy that the following winter at Stoke Paddocks would pass far more agreeably than the present one in Hamilton Place.

For, with the exception of the moments devoted to courtship, there was very little to reconcile him to the four hours of daylight in the twenty-four, of a London winter. The

new parliament was assembled. The honorable member for Lanstephen was scudding about Whitehall in a cabriolet of unimpeachable propriety, looking grave, spruce, and assiduous, as become a new member; while the morning papers once more enlightened their great letters with extracts from the luminous speeches of the honorable member for Wilsbury.

"I wish you would bring your cousin here some morning, Mr. Cressingham," said Florence one day, when her fashionable suitor, with flushing cheek and flashing eye, was actually awaiting an opportunity for the proposal he had so long meditated.

"I regret that you should have hit upon one of the only requests with which it is not in my power to comply," observed Reginald, his countenance overclouded in a moment.

"And why not?" persisted Florence; and without waiting for an answer, she burst forth into a violent panegyric on the member for Wilsbury, to which the ex-governess chaunted forth a second, strictly in tune. "My father is a devoted admirer of your cousin's talents and principles," said she. "My father swears by Mr. Cressingham, does he not, Miss Pettigrew? So does my uncle Bartholomew; so do all our city connexions. Such eloquence, such decision, such consistency in all his speeches! We always read them aloud, and sometimes more than once,—do we not, Miss Pettigrew?"

The ex-governess was smilingly confirmative.

"Papa considers him the leading man of the day, does he not, Miss Petigrew? and my uncle Bartholomew has betted a hundred guineas with my uncle John, that if ever the Tories come in, he will have a seat in the cabinet!"

While Florence was making her usual appeal to Miss Pattigrew, Reginald imperceptibly shrugged his shoulders.

"I trust, therefore, that you will not deny us so great a pleasure as your cousin's acquaintance," added his intended bride. "I assure you he will be welcomed here on bended knees. Will he——"

"Not upon *my* introduction, certainly," hastily interrupted Reginald; "for I myself have not the honor of his acquaintance."

"Not acquainted with your own cousin?" exclaimed Miss Worts,—warm with all the humanities of kith and kinship with the families of uncle Bartholomew and uncle John;—"how very extraordinary!—Is it not, Miss Pettigrew?"

"My mother was extremely ill-used by her brother, the father of Mr. Cressingham of Manny Park," replied Reginald, gravely; "a coldness ensued; nor have I any object in seeking a reconciliation."

"How very provoking!" exclaimed Florence. "Is it not, Miss Pettigrew?"

"Very provoking my dear."

"To own the truth," said she, again turning to Reginald, "when I was introduced to you last year at the Caledonian Ball, we thought you were the clever Cressingham—did we not, Miss Pettigrew?—and even after finding out my mistake, I always flattered myself that, *through* you, we might still come to know him."

"I am sorry you should have been disappointed," observed Reginald drily, not a little piqued; adding, in a tenderer voice—"I, at least, have found in you all that I anticipated in our first meeting; that is," he continued, perceiving that Miss Pettigrew had betaken herself into the other room in search of Burke's 'Landed Gentry,' to look out for Cressingham of Manny Park, "all that can promise happiness in domestic life to the man whom you favor with your choice."

"I am sure I hope my virtues may keep their word," retorted Florence, with a saucier laugh than Reginald thought altogether becoming so critical a moment.

"May I be permitted to add 'amen' to your wish?"—demanded he, drawing a *little* closer towards the work-table.

"Certainly, if you have any interest in the affair," replied Florence, still smilling, but without casting down her eyes or blushing as he expected.

"*Any* interest?" reiterated Reginald, his breath coming short, and his countenance assuming a still more earnest expression, when he saw, through the folding doors, that Miss Pettigrew was busy with vol. I, of Burke, unaware that let-

ter C is included in vol. II. "*Any* interest?—When the hopes dearest to my heart are——"

"My dear Mr. Cressingham!—recollect yourself!—What *are* you saying?" cried Florence still perfectly self-possessed.

"I am saying what I trust my conduct for the last two months has fully prepared you to hear," replied he, really breathless with emotion, "that if the offer of my hand and heart——"

"You cannot be serious!" again ruthlessly interrupted the young lady. "You cannot intend to propose to *me*?—you surely are aware that I am engaged."

"*Engaged!*" cried Reginald, sinking into a chair.

"To my father's partner, Mr. Jeremiah Jones, whom we are daily expecting home from his estates in Jamaica."

"I have certainly heard you allude to the arrival of a Mr. Jones," faltered Reginald; "but after all the encouragement you had given me, how was I to conjecture——"

"Encouragement?" repeated Florence, scarcely repressing a smile. "Have I not admitted to you our ulterior object in making your acquaintance?"

"In *making* it, perhaps. But when you saw my growing attachment—when you became aware that it was my intention to offer you my hand——"

"How was I to surmise anything of the kind? I know that I am plain,—that I have no attractions of family or person. Your friend, Lord Robert Leigh, proposed to me, I admit; but, as he made no secret among his friends, only as a more agreeable alternative than the Bench. From you, however,—from the rich Mr. Cressingham,—from Mr. Pine-apple Fritters Cressingham, I thought I could not be exposed to a similar insult. *You* could not be blinded to the frightfulness of the ugly heiress by the derangement of your affairs. With *you* I thought myself safe; and consequently assumed the ease and frankness of a friend."

Involuntarily Reginald started at this allusion to the interested nature of his views.

"I am quite aware of my position," added Florence, more sternly;—"I am a brewer's daug hter,—a sallow, ill-featured girl, from whose appearance, when announced

among strangers, people turn away with indifference or dislike. The man I am to marry has been accustomed from childhood to all this; and those who, not thus familiarized, affect blindness, can only be actuated by motives which expose them to my utmost contempt. Is it not so, Miss Pettigrew?"

"Certainly, my dear!" responded the governess, who was now poring over vol. II in search of "Cressingham of Manny Park," right opposite to Cressingham of Stoke Paddocks;—who, perceiving that he had been played upon, to divert the winter dulness of a house in Portland Place, by a young lady capable of becoming a Mrs. Jeremiah Jones, and whose betrothed was visiting his plantations in Jamaica, made so hasty and angry an exit, as scarcely allowed time for Mrs. Pettigrew to curtesy him out, and ring the bell on his departure.

Three days before, Reginald had instructed his capital friend in Gray's Inn to prepare his rent-roll for being laid before his future father-in-law, the wealthy Worts of Liquorpond Street and Portland Place. Three days afterwards, he wrote from Paris, to require such a credit on Rothschild as would enable him to make an extended tour on the continent. Snapper was far more taken by surprise by this proposal than Florence by hers. But it was too late to remonstrate. His victim was for the present safe out of his clutches.

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## CHAPTER XII.

> Now there is nothing gives a man such spirits,
> Leavening his blood, as cayenne doth a curry,
> As going at full speed—no matter where its
> Direction be, so 'tis but in a hurry.
>
> BYRON.

Poor Reginald made but a single rush from London to Paris. On quitting Portland Place, he had ordered his superfine valet to prepare for a journey, and for remaining be-

hind ; and started at once in the steam-packet, without carriage or attendants.

All his object was to get away,—no matter how, no matter whither. He seemed to fancy it written in his face that the Rich Cressingham had wanted to sell himself to an heiress,—had been refused in favor of a Mr. Jeremiah Jones,—had been made mockery for the Philistines by the daughter of Worts the brewer! To quit the country was the only means his fancy suggested of wiping off so vile a stain. He could not go too soon, or too far, or with too little regard to his own comfort. For once, he would rough it, like other men who were not men of fortune.

Long before he reached Paris, however, the self-conceit so long and dearly cherished, had received a thousand shocks that made him doubtful of the discretion of his project. It was not his sense of niceity that was offended—it was his self-conceit. Accustomed, wherever he went, to have his consequence bruited by the vulgar boasting of his servants, hitherto he had flattered himself that the deference paid to the long purse of the rich Cressingham, was tendered to his personal distinctions ; and could scarcely brook the familiarity which slapped on the back and cross-questioned the young traveller who spoke such villanous French. The shabby old caleche offered to him at Calais as an appropriate travelling carriage, appeared, to eyes accustomed to the equipages of Adams and Houlditch, a positive insult ; and when thrust, as a solitary traveller, of little consequence, into the worst room of the inn, and advised to dine at the *table d'hote*, as more convenient to the waiter, his wrath exploded. The postillions greeted him with the dogged familiarity of all French subordinates paid by the tariff ; while the beggars to whom he scattered his coin saluted him with a grin as "Monsieur Goddam !" The ugliness of the country, the ugliness of the people, and, in spite of all this, his own utter insignificance among them, disgusted him with his journey in the very outset.

Even in Paris, matters were scarcely more auspicious. The bankers refused to cash the bills of a stranger ; and, till his letters of credit arrived, he was obliged to content himself with the moderate sum he had brought away in his pocket, and abstain from the immoderate pomps and vani-

ties of a fine gentleman.—People consequently treated him as they would have treated Gerald Langley, or any other good-looking younger brother of tolerable address.—Nobody stood aside for him,—nobody waited till he was served,—nobody gave up their seat at the play or place in the *restaurant*, because it was coveted by the rich Cressingham;—and whereas, in revolutionized France, civility has become an obsolete weakness, he was more hustled, pushed, shoved, trod upon, and sworn at, during his first week in Paris, than in the course of all the years that had elapsed since he was a fag at Eton.

So much the better for him! These petty grievances effaced the trace of deeper evils. In a month's time he had almost forgotten there was a street in London called Portland Place, or that he had a cousin and a cast-off attorney seated in parliament.

With all his dissatisfaction, however, at the cavalier habits of the citizens, he was enchanted with the city. The buoyancy of the atmosphere, the hilarity of the population, the brightness of the shops, the sprightliness of the women, the variety of public amusements, afforded a welcome relief after the unspeakable dulness of Stoke, and the oppressive formalities of London.—But, above all, he was unpursued there by a painful notoriety. If nobody performed Ko Too to him, nobody knew that he had been blackballed at White's rejected at Almack's defeated in a county election, refused by an heiress, caricatured as Pine Apple Fritters Cressingham, and served as minced meat, one day in seven, to the curious in newspaper scandal.

Comforted by finding himself regarded with perfect indifference, after having fancied himself a mark for the jests of all around him, he became almost as light of heart as if he had not been the rich Cressingham. He was compelled indeed to exert his faculties, intellectual and physical, to place himself on a par with other people; but rendered at his ease by the independence of his isolation, exertion became less irksome. By the arrival of the credit on Rothschild, which amounted only to a third of the sum he had demanded, he had got into the habit of being civil, and of not expecting to find himself an object of deference to all the world.

The further he went, the rougher and the more efficacious his schooling. After spending the remainder of the spring in Paris, brightened in spirits and health by the excitement of its popular diversions, he proceded to the Rhine ;—and while visiting the baths of the Taunus, and mingling with the throngs of princes and swindlers at Baden Baden,—frequenting *table d'hotes* and public rooms,—and adding a smattering of bad German to his indifferent French, he was gradually sinking by cubits in his self created stature.

Reginald could scarcely forbear smiling as he recalled to mind how, at Oxford, after perusing the sparkling pages of "Vivian Grey," he had dreamed of just such a rough-and-ready tour, and regarded it as a pleasure denied to a man of *his* consideration ;—boyishly imagining it as impossible for the rich Cressingham to preserve his incognito as for the Duke of Wellington. Instead of which, he now readily perceived that it would have been far more difficult to persuade the simple Rhinelanders that a plain Mr. Cressingham —not ennobled—not a place-holder—not a *decore*—not a chamberlain to any sovereign under the sun—could be entitled to dip in the dish with the smallest Baron of the empire, or least whiskered of the Russian generals frequenting their watering places.

The lesson was worth learning. It was something to have become aware that, in the estimation of a few billions or trillions of the continental population, he stood little higher than an Elbeuf clothier, or, at best, some country gentleman of Alsace or Lorraine. From the wandering hordes of English travellers, meanwhile, he scrupulously kept aloof. He hated their supercilious faces,—he hated their listless habits,—he hated their notion that nothing good enough to eat, drink, or visit, is to be met with out of England.

While he was thus storing his mind with that best of wisdom called self-knowledge, the usual consequences ensued at home from his abrupt departure for the continent. The tailors, of whom he no longer ordered two coats and a dozen waistcoats per month,—the coach-makers, who had no longer thirty pounds' worth of repairs to furnish to his various carriages,—the silversmiths, where he had ceased to exhaust his invention on rainy days by projecting fanciful soup-tureens,—all the army of Bond street martyrs, in short,

in whose books the name of the rich Cressingham headed page after page, and who were content that it should do so while there was a prospect of its heading pages and pages to come, began to ask angry questions of his man of business, and cross-question the servants in Hamilton Place; and so far from being satisfied, as heretofore, with the grandiloquent answer—"Good God, sir!—you surely cannot entertain any uneasiness concerning the solvency of a man of Mr. Cressingham's fortune?"—ventured to reply, that a gentleman of Mr. Cressingham's fortune quitting England at ten minutes' notice, *tete-a-tete* with his portmanteau, had very much the air of a gentleman who had met with *mis*-fortune.

Suspicions, like bats, flit about with wondrous activity in the dusk. A cloud once overshadowing the destinies of the absentee, it was easy to set in movement the most injurious reports. The waiters at the clubs and coffee-houses, to whom he had been in the habit of flinging five-pound notes, whispered far and near the imputations cast upon the prodigal; and with the speed usual in such matters, scandals which, like sorrows, "come not single spies, but in battalions," begat further falsehoods with monstrous haste of propagation.

"So poor Cress is regularly done up at last!" observed Sir Harry Morton to Gerald Langley, as they were smoking together on the steps at Crockford's, one fine night in May.

"At *last?*—at *first* you mean!—I sometimes fancy he was born ruined, as children are sometimes *still* born. Never was there a fellow who bungled away his money so confoundedly!—What did he ever get for it,—except, indeed, being laughed at?"

"*That*," interrupted Lord Robert Leigh, who was standing near them, "was because he never was a really good fellow. There was nothing warm or cordial in Cress. He couldn't drink,—he couldn't play,—he couldn't ride,—he couldn't dress,—he couldn't do anything that became the position he wanted to shine in. Men hated him because he was a prig;—women because, relying on his fortune, he took no pains to be agreeable."

"How *was* a man to be agreeable who was never at his ease, even in his own house?" cried Langley. "Some-

times, when Cress wanted to do grand at the head of his own table, and was giving himself airs, by a single word I swear I have made him look as if he were sitting upon thorns!"

"That was remarkably kind of you, my dear fellow," coolly observed Morton taking his cigar from his mouth.

"Who could help it?—When did Cressingham spare any one it was in his power to show up?—"

"I never imagined his powers of sarcasm to be very alarming," retorted Morton. "At least he was good-natured."

"There are other modes of showing up besides quizzing. He knew, for instance, that I pique myself on my billiards, that I am considered second best player in the Guards. Well, he never got me down to that stupid place of his—(where, by the way, the table is a showy affair, but detestable!)—without matching me against Vardyne, who happens to be the only man able to give me a point or two. It was pure spite of Cress,—nothing but spite. Then to Holmeswell, as you may remember, he behaved shamefully! When Lady Adelaide North was going to marry Beaconsfield, after having refused Cress (just as if the Maunderwells would have heard of her marrying Cressingham—a fellow without rank or connexion), he insisted upon Holmeswell's booking up a few hundreds he owed him (a loan forced upon him by Cress at Oxford;) and poor Holmeswell had the deuce's own work to make up the sum, without calling upon his father;—who just then you know, marrying his daughter, and so forth, would not have found it agreeable to stump up."

"How blackguard!" cried Lord Robert Leigh, not troubling himself to recollect the real version of the affair, of which he had been a witness. "Well! I'm afraid one must give Cress up. It's a monstrous pity,—for really that house in Hamilton Place was pleasant enough at times, and very near being the right thing."

"Ay! but that, *a peu pres*, is what spoils all that is not the right thing in this world!" retorted Gerald. "Cress wanted tact,—the one thing needful to a man like him,—and his house wanted *ton*. Cress thought that a man's way if paved with gold, was as sure as the North road; and so,

you see, he laid it on so plaguy thick, that he left none for the man who was to walk over it—no uncommon case. And after all, you know, Cress was *not* a man of fortune. I don't call an estate worth having, in which one has only a life interest."

"I saw from the first he was in a fair way to be ruined; but I never thought he would turn out a shirking fellow!"—was the Parthian blow of Morton, who was many hundreds in debt to the absentee; while for Lord Robert Leigh, Cressingham had engaged his name in bill transactions to an amount that had still to be determined.

Such was the fate of the Heir with many friends, and thus was the good name of the prodigal whispered away! The fashionable world talked of him as an extinct meteor—the foolish fellow who had done so many preposterous things last season, and was now gone to the dogs; and the sentence once circulated, was final. The fashionable world thinks, feels, and acts in coteries, as regularly as troops are manœuvred in regiments and brigades;—and had Cress even possessed a friend, his single protest would have gone for nothing.

The secluded life led by poor Mrs. Blair, meanwhile fortunately prevented her from becoming cognizant of his disgrace. It was sufficient mortification for the mother of that only son, that every day, the newspapers rang with the name of her nephew, while the closed up windows and weedy lawn of the Hall attested the nothingness of his cousin. *He* was away. *He* was over the sea. Mothers of less fortunate sons were so happy as to enjoy the presence of their offspring; while *her* hours of solitary suffering were fated to be unsoothed by the hand of affection. But of the few who shared with her servants the task of varying her monotonous day, there was no one cruel enough to repeat the rumour circulated in the neighbourhood of Stoke Paddocks by the neighbours still honoured by the notice of the honourable member for Llanstephen, that Reginald had found it *convenient* to leave the country.

Justina, who, though scarcely more than fifteen in age, was a woman in reason, noticed with pleasure, and that in Reginald's letters from abroad, which she was admitted to the privilege of reading to his mother, he was careful to

dwell upon the improvement of his health from the early hours and sober habits of continental life, as the surest means of reconciling her to his absence. For she knew that such an argument would suffice. After all, nothing was so natural as his tour; and Mrs. Blair might be pardoned her implicit belief that her son was improving himself by a survey of foreign countries, and would soon return to settle permanently in his own. With her usual amiable faculty of finding all things for the best, on learning that Reginald was to pass the winter at Naples, she actually decided that it was just as well he should absent himself from Stoke during the prevalence of the unpoularity produced by his election despotism; which had produced such injurious results, that no one could be found to take the vacant farms of the tyrant of Stoke Paddocks, and they consequently remained on the hands of his steward, who was little prepared to turn them to account.

Justina did not gainsay the opinion of the poor deceived mother. But *she*, poor girl, heard enough at the vicarage of Reginald's crimes and misdemeanors! The absentee was made accountable for the illness and discontent of the poor old man, who, moping by his fireside, lamenting over the estrangement of his country neighbors consequent upon his obsequious devotion to his patron, ascribed the fault to Reginald rather than to himself; while the melancholy Drench seemed to consider that the abstraction of Athanasius Docket from his whist club was equally attributable to the nefarious proceedings of the young Man of Fortune.

In a neighborhood so unincidental, two such events as the closing of the Hall and the emigration of the attorney were fertile topics of discussion; and, as if it were necessary to espouse the partisanship of either the ward or guardian, as Athanasius was now a man in authority, an M. P., nay, a valuable, active, plodding, work-a-day member,—one of the darlings of the Carlton Club, while Reginald was nothing,—an absentee,—a ruined man,—likely to sell his livings and neglect his apothecary's bill,—they were all but unanimous in elevating their worthy friend Docket to the seventh heaven, and depressing his victim to its antipodes.

There was, indeed, much to command the admiration of the vulgar in the steady ascent of the attorney. Like the

mob, who, though they have witnessed the gradual inflation of a balloon, cannot restrain their wonder on seeing it mount into the clouds, they were full of suprise to find their quondam cater-cousin figuring at levees and dining at political dinners, like any other pillar of the senatorial temple. They would have been still more amazed could they have been made to understand the influence exercised by his activity of mind and body, his habits of business, and steadiness of deportment. If not somebody, he was something; for a man conversant with the law, who comes into public life in the full maturity of his talents, unhampered by public antecedents or family connexions—who has given no pledges and accepted no favors,—is inestimable to a party.

The name of Athanasius Docket, Esq., M. P., already figured as governor of divers charitable and scientific associations, as well as in the Court Guide as owner of a town mansion in Duke Street, Westminister, and a country seat called Grove House, Llanstephen, N. W. He was understood to possess considerable property in mines; and a man possessed of property in mines, is regarded as a sort of Fortunatus whose riches it is useless to compute. Difficult, it certainly is; and such had probably been his cautious motive for investing in a manner so inostensible, the accumulation of his thrifty servitude to the successive tyrants of Stoke Paddocks. No one was able to point out the extent of his possessions, so accurately as to excite surmises concerning the honesty of their origin.

All that the world discerned in him was a steady, plodding, hard-headed lawyer, toryfied by the possession of landed property, who had been driven from the agency of the Cressingham estates by his abhorrence of the profligacy, personal and political, of the young crocodile so strangely hatched under his barn-yard wing; and so useful was he on committees, so undauntable by files of papers or the thick-headedness of country gentlemen, so unshackled by private engagements, and so willing and able to do every one's business as well as his own,—that in the course of his first session, not a leading man of the party but solicited his acquaintance, gave him dinners and all the trouble in their power; and it was impossible to be more surely in the way

to a baronetcy and the hand of some decayed spinster of quality.

If anything were wanting to confirm his odour of sanctity in his old neighborhood, it might have been found in the increasing disorder of the Stoke Paddocks estates. For some time, the old steward and his subordinates had labored to keep matters together, and fight against the unpopularity and disorderliness of their young master. But when such people as Snapper and Co. were set in authority over them, —when the extortions practised upon them rendered it impossible to do justice to the estate,—when the most ruinous levies were made upon the timber, and all seemed devoted to waste and ruin, they retreated in shame and disgust, to make way for the disreputable successors provided for the capital fellow in Gray's Inn.

All was now riot and abuse. Messrs. Snapper and Co. seemed to consider it absurd that, because the penniless Man of Fortune was amusing himself with sailing in the Bay of Naples, his pheasants should remain unshot, his rivers unfinished, his venison uneaten;—and if there were increased difficulty in finding tenants for his farms, there was none whatever in wasting the substance they provided.

Could the ghost of Sir Giles Cressingham have surveyed, from beneath his favorite beech-tree, the goings on at Stoke, the ignominious race of retainers which supplied the place of his respectable janissaries, and the wild and shaggy condition of his beautiful seat, he would probably have lamented the ill judging perversity which had caused him to alienate his inheritance from his legal successor, in favor of a boy whose childhood he had taken no pains to surround with efficient advisers.

## CHAPTER XIII.

A form of light, like some good influence
Haunting the precincts of that sad old place.
VANE

IT would be difficult to imagine anything more closely resembling the field of the sluggard, than was now presented by the domain of Stoke Paddocks. The only implement busy there was the axe. Its fine timber lay cumbering the ground; while the weeds in the ill-farmed fields seemed towering to supply the place of the fallen oaks and elms of more provident centuries.

Still, nature protects her own; and whether the park-keepers were few or many, the old thorn trees persisted in blossoming in their appointed season, and the gorse and broom around them were as golden, and the herbage as thymy, as ever. Though the closely shuttered windows of the hall imparted a ghastly look, as though the owner lay dead, nothing could exceed the lovliness of the fair landscape.

The few strangers who visited the spot to admire the beauty of sites whose charm was unalienable, even by the folly of the owner, used to note meanwhile with wonder, amid those solitary glades and broomy knolls, a fair girl ever wandering there, as if without aim or object, like some Hamadryad left shelterless by the destruction of her verdant home. Amid those lonely scenes, gathering beauty and wisdom into her soul from so intimate an inter-communion with the works of nature, Justina, whose life at the vicarage was a weary one, spent the greater share of her summer hours in strolling about the venerable place, endeared by a thousand early associations.

The poor old Vicar, peevish and infirm, was often so impatient of the presence of his grand-daughter, that his wife promoted more than ever her daily visits to The Wilderness, where they were so truely acceptable; and as the vicarage lay at one extremity of the park, and the garden gate of Mrs. Blair at the other, nothing was easier than for Justina to loiter by the way, prolonging her ramblings through

every quarter of the extensive park. In her simple white gown,—her pure young face beaming with intelligence,—her movements replete with natural grace, she might have been mistaken for the guardian genius of the place,—albeit its condition showed little to attest the providence of her guardianship.

Justina was now just entering her sixteenth year; and but for the solitary and studious nature of her life, would have been light-hearted as other girls of that happy age. But everything to which she was attached was fated to convey saddening impressions. An orphan from her infancy, the old people of whom she was the only surviving relative, thought they were doing enough for her by laying up three-fourths of their income for her sake, without conceiving that a more enlivening existence than their dull parlour might be advantageous to her mind and health;—and though this early seclusion was so far advantageous that it compelled her to have recourse for companionship to books, and books of a nature more grave than usually fall into the hands of girls not brought up in an old-fashioned country parsonage, it produced a singular influence upon her mind and disposition. But for those grave and ripening studies, the girl would have become a visionary; but for her lonely rambles among the venerable groves and musky gardens of the Hall, too severely matter-of-fact. She knew nothing of what is called the world; for the ten or twenty persons of her acquaintance were almost as distinct from that well-drilled assemblage as if belonging to another sphere; and the deer, to whom the voice and step of their daily visitant were now so familiar that, forgetting their wildness, they came to her to be caressed, were far more of companions to the high-minded girl than such people as the twaddling apothecary of Mrs. Blair, or even his feeble patient.

Still, there were qualities in the invalid at The Wilderness that greatly endeared her to Justina. Her gentle voice and lady-like manners had been the first indication of a world more refined than that of her humdrum circle; and to admiration, in process of time, gratitude succeeded. As a child, the little orphan of the vicarage had been accepted as a plaything; and as she advanced in girlhood, a thousand acts of womanly kindness,—gifts of books,—instruction in

music and drawing,—attached her to the mild recluse who, in the recreation of her company, strove to forget the absence of her son.

And still, amid all their lessons, their talk was of Reginald. If Mrs. Blair had a good trait to relate of him, she confided it to Justina ; or whenever the little girl indulged in reminiscences of those early days, when the schoolboy had been so fond of the child, she seemed to feel that it was only his mother who would deign to believe that the rich Cressingham of Stoke Paddocks was the same Reginald Blair who had printed alphabets for her instruction, or made cowslip balls for her delight.

By degrees, Justina became almost as a daughter to the sick woman, whose shyness and debility of nature brought her down almost to the level of her youthful companion. Both profited by the connexion ; the girl, in acquiring elegance of manners beyond what even the refinement of nature imparted by her peculiar life and studies, might have attained ;—the woman, in the gentle sympathy of one who loved her as the nearest approach to anything she had ever known of a mother. For the good lady at the vicarage was a bustling, fussy body, much more intent upon her household affairs and village duties than upon fostering the affections and faculties of her son's orphan ; and felt that in keeping her from chilblains in winter and overheating herself in summer, she was showing more kindness than by listening to nonsensical histories of hawthorn hedges or squirrels nests.

It was consequently from the fair-faced valetudinarian, wrapt in her white India shawl, in the corner of her quiet chintz sofa, that Justina received the daily kiss,—the pat upon the shoulder,—the reproving or approving smile,—and all the matronly caresses which keep up the holier tendernesses of filial life between mother and child. At The Wilderness, she was sure of a kind word, let whatever would betide. If sometimes out of spirits, Mrs. Blair was never out of humour. Chastened in the school of adversity by the events of her early widowhood, she had never laid aside the humility of nature engendered by her hours of sorrow ; and was, in fact, as grateful for the little girl's affection, as if she had never earned it by acts of favour and forbearance.

Sweet is love-service to such a friend!—Justina would have blushed for herself had she allowed even her favourite rambles over the soft moss in summer, or crisp snow in winter, to interfere with her attendance on her partial protectress; and when her grandmother, who, too old for much spmpathy in her pursuits, hinted that, since it disturbed the good Doctor's nap after dinner to hear her turning over the pages of the book with which she solaced their dull evenings, she might go and dine or drink tea with Mrs. Blair whenever she pleased, the offer was readily accepted.

Sad, therefore, was the event to Reginald's mother, even beyond the common sympathies of neighbourship and good will, when a second paralytic seizure, by suddenly carrying off the Vicar, threatened to deprive her of her young companion. She knew that, thenceforth, Justina's time must be devoted to the old lady, and that the old lady must speedily make way at the vicarage for the successor long since provided by the foresight of Messrs Snapper and Co.; and as it was already rumoured that the good Doctor, who, whatever treasures he might have been laying up in Heaven, had laid up in the land where moth and rust do corrupt no less a sum than 38.000*l.* for the benefit of his widow and their future representative, Mrs. Blair entertained little doubt that Mrs. Chaffles, with so good an income, would hasten to Bath or London, for the sake of more cheerful associations for Justina.

But the widow of the vicarage belonged to a century which was wise enough to hold that the pleasures of youth ought to be subservient to the comforts of age; and had no mind to uproot herself from a soil in which she had so long flourished.

She had become part and parcel of the neighbourhood of Stoke. Stoke was her home. She knew the village by heart. Having seen the young people born, and the old people young, she cared more about *them* than about any other people, young or old; and though she was no longer privileged to provide them broths when sick, or flannel when rheumatic, she would not deny herself the satisfaction of at least walking through the village, and being curtseyed to, whenever the weather and her patterns permitted.

The modest mansion inhabited by the honourable member for Llanstephen while the plumage of his new dignities

was still unfledged, was fortunately still vacant, at the distance of little more than a mile from the village. Thither, the widow determined to bend her steps; and from the gratitude evinced by Justina when the decision was announced to her, it might have been surmised that *her* wishes alone had been consulted in the selection.

*Now*, however, were her trials to commence! even those trials of temper indispensable to perfect every woman's vocation upon earth. The old lady, whose time had been so fully occupied by her duties as a wife and a Lady Bountiful that it was a relief to her to find the leisure of Justina bestowed elsewhere, now discovered (the new Vicaress having evinced considerable jealousy of her interference in the village) that there was scarcely a moment in the day in which she could dispense with her granddaughter's society. Even after the poor girl had devoted whole mornings to sorting her flower-seeds, cataloguing her books, or copying out recipes, the fussy old lady would not hear of an evening visit to The Wilderness, now that Mrs. Blair's pony chaise or her own must be in requisition for the purpose. No sooner, in short, did she perceive the girl's earnest desire to persist in her attentions to her kind friend, than she grew so jealous as to make every visit a matter of pain and grief to all parties.

Still, with grateful forbearance and grateful consistency, Justina steered her way between both, with as little offence as possible; made no reply when reproached with the noble fortune laid up for her by those towards whom she evinced no natural affection; and answered only by a gentle kiss on the hand of the invalid, when assured that by proper management, she might certainly come oftener. She never rebelled—never murmured;—too grateful to Providence for having fixed her so near her old home to resent the caprices to which she was subjected. The terrors which had seized her mind on Mrs. Blair's suggestion that her grandmother would probably settle in town, or at some watering place, had made her clearly understand all the value she affixed to the beloved haunts of her childhood, and all the torture of bidding them adieu.

Moreover she fancied that, when *she* was gone, there would be no one left to love them!—Not a single being connected with the old Hall seemed to take note of the

bursting of its vernal verdure, or the reddening of its autumnal tints.—No soul but herself ever now pushed out the little pleasure boat on the lake, to delight in the surrounding scenery ;—no one sauntered through the entangled shrubberies ; no one heeded how the flowers grew wild, or the song-birds increased.

There were certain old trees to which she attached a sense of companionship, under which Reginald had made a sylvan home for her and her toys in childhood ; or where, in riper years, she had first turned a page of Shakspeare, or dwelt enraptured over the more earnest inspirations of Wordsworth—inspirations such as her own heart had found in the running brooks and green forests, her sole companions.—And these, she fancied, would be sacrificed, like the rest, after her departure !—The red cross would be marked upon her own old oak,—the oak under which she had watched every morning as a child for the first opening of the garden gate of The Wilderness, for Reginald to come out and play. It was something to keep her eye upon her own oak, even though the influence which assigned its first charm had departed !—

For some time past, however, her associations with the oak had been growing more satisfactory. The letters now addressed to Mrs. Blair by her son, savoured far more of Reginald, and far less of Pine-apple Fritters Cressingham. There was more truthfulness in his expressions, more reality in his kindness. He seemed *really* eager for her health and welfare,—really glad to find that Mrs. Chaffles had fixed herself in the neighborhood ; and that little Tina, as he still called her, was so great a comfort to the invalid. Unaware that even his own correspondence passed through "little Tina's" hands, he expressed his heartfelt delight on hearing that she was so well provided for by her grandfather.

"The precarious nature of Tina's prospects had often made me anxious," wrote he. "For though, with such fine preferment, it seemed easy for old Chaffles to insure his life, or something of that kind, for his grandchild's benefit, my own extravagance and carlessness in money-matters have led me to expect no better from other people ; and the first thing that occurred to me, on learning from my man of bus-

iness that the living of Stoke had fallen in, was how I could decently offer some sort of provision to the widow and grandchild: though, if I am to believe Messrs Snapper and co., the involved state of my affairs might have rendered it difficult!"

The kind intention of her old playmate was not thrown away on the grateful girl; and she could have wrung her hands for very bitterness when, that very evening, on taking refuge under her own oak, and diverting her eyes from the green laurel hedge overtopping the garden paling of The Wilderness towards the grim-looking desolate old Hall,—she felt how little interest was maintained by either his old home or his new in the eyes of their owner;—how little they had profited by *him*, or he by *them!*

Little as she knew of worldly business, it was clear to Justina, from Mr. Cressingham's letters, that though in some degree aware of the unsatisfactory nature of the parties to whom his affairs were trusted, he was too deeply involved to extricate himself without more exertion and greater self-denial than could be expected from either his nature or education. She saw that the evils which had arisen from his recklessness were, through his inertness, increasing in magnitude; nor was it possible to warn him of all that was going on upon the estate during his absence.

Justina could address him only through his mother, who, suffering from a disease of the heart, was not to be agitated by anxiety or evil tidings without danger.—Nay, even *had* she taken courage to insinuate something nearer the truth to Mrs. Blair than had yet come to her knowledge, there was every probability that Reginald would turn a deaf ear to her suggestions; for upon the old Vicar's once presuming to hint at the irregularities of the new steward, he had received a harsh rebuff from his patron, who accused him of being the partizan of Docket, and blinded in his favor to disparage the new man of business.

Thus was poor Justina condemned to the vexation of witnessing in silence the devastation of the property; and hearing, without possibility of affording aid, the murmurs of the tenants. She beheld all, as in a dream, without the power of interference.—Frank as her childhood had been towards her playmate, nay, frank as her girlhood had

been towards the rich Cressingham, at all risks of offending and estrangiag him, something of a woman's mistrust now came over her forewarning that it was not for *her* to address the wayward exile touching the disposal of his affairs.—

Still, it lessened her joy in the growing rationality of the pursuits his letters described, to feel that others were executing in his name all the follies he had formerly executed for himself; that while he spoke of his rides on the shores of the Bosphorous and modest establishment at Pera, the house in Hamilton Place remained undisposed of; nor, till a report reached the country through the Duke of Granton's family, that a fashionable auctioneer had announced the probability of his having in the course of the following spring the Stoke Paddocks gallery, more especially a celebrated pair of family portraits by Holbein, to dispose of, did Justina become desperate.

Notwithstanding Reginald's lukewarm pride in the Cressinghams, as of female descent, she could not suppose him capable of disposing for money of such sacred family relics as portraits by Holbein, unless on the brink of ruin; and on this occasion actually ventured to address to him a letter of remonstrance.

The result was as she had anticipated. He had no part in a project so barbarous; and on receiving her letter sent a bitter reproof to Snapper and Co. for having permitted such rumors to get wind. He had once said to them in jest, "Money I must have—and if I cannot mortgage my estate, I can at least sell my plate and pictures;"—but it was in the same reckless spirit of menace in which he would have talked of selling the ashes of his ancestors out of the family vault.—

The letter containing this intelligence conveyed unspeakable comfort to the heart of Justina. Forced to address in the tone of a reasonable being the young companion with whom he had hitherto dealt as with a wayward and insignificant child, Reginald could not refrain from adding a few grateful words touching her devotedness to his mother. He even solemnly recommended Mrs. Blair to her continued attention; adding, in a few illegible words, that, since his own disgracefully useless course was fated to afford so little addition to her happiness, it was a comfort to feel that she

had found a daughter where she was less entitled to expect solace and affection.

Again and again, was this letter perused by the young admonitress of Mr. Cressingham; and long was it worn near her heart, as if affording sufficient compensation for all the vexatious hours she had endured in consequence of her consistent attendance on her friend at The Wilderness. But it did not decrease her anxieties on Reginald's account to perceive that he gave himself up as a lost case;—that he still wanted the energy and self-reliance which might have enabled him, even now, to start forth in his own defence, assume a more appropriate position in the world, and command, by higher purposes and steady conduct, the respect he had been unable to purchase by prodigality of gold.

She could not, however, again address the absentee. It was not for a girl of her age to establish a correspondence with a young man of his; and all the result of her altered state of feelings towards him was a tone of deeper interest in reading aloud his letters to his mother, and milder interpretation of all she saw and heard concerning his faults and follies.

"You are not quite so harsh in your way of talking about my poor Reginald as you used to be," observed Mrs. Blair, as she was wishing her good night, after an evening which, by special favor of her grandmother, she had been permitted to spend at The Wilderness, a few weeks after the arrival of *the* letter from the Levant—"You speak *now* as if you almost thought he might some day come back an altered man, to settle down happily at home!"

"God grant it!" replied Justina, bending down to receive on her forehead the kiss imprinted there at every parting by her adopted mother.

"What a doubly happy day would it be to me," added Mrs. Blair with a smile, "could I only hope that the two old playmates would take a fancy to each other,—and my dearest Tina become my daughter indeed!"

Tears swam in the eyes of the girl who was receiving these affectionate adieus; but she instantly checked them.

"If Mr. Cressingham could but hear you utter such humiliating insinuations!" cried she, "Mr. Cressingham so haughty, so supercilious, I will not say *proud*,—for in such

a station as his proper pride appears to me becoming, do you imagine that the three years he has been away have so changed him as to make him think the girl he despised as a child compared with himself,—as ill-born and obscurely educated,—grown worthy to be the wife of Cressingham of Stoke Paddocks?"

"It is from the change of my own opinions that I have learned to hope for an alteration in *his*. Time was my dearest child, that even *I* was anxious my son should make a brilliant connexion; I was pleased when the newspapers announced that he was to marry Lady Adelaide North; and conceived that, with Reginald's fortune, he was entitled to match with the aristocracy. But now, I would rather have my little Tina for a daughter-in-law, than any duke's daughter in the land. There is no reason he should not have become as much wiser as myself."

"Beware, at all events, of allowing Mr. Cressingham to surmise such a project," cried Justina, laughingly, as she quitted the room, "or you will be having him turn Turk and settle in a kiosk for the remainder of his days, in dread of returning to the Hall!"

The bloom painted upon her cheek by these startling allusions, had scarcely subsided when Justina arrived at home. But it was not to be of long continuance. She saw in a moment that her grandmother had disagreeable news to communicate, connected, in some way or other, with the family at once the object of her deference and animosity. The fussy old lady was big with momentous tidings.

"And pray, my dear, how did your poor friend bear this dreadful affair?" said she, as soon as her granddaughter entered the room. "I'm sure I quite trembled when I heard it, to think what the consequence might be to that poor shattered frame of hers!—though I can't bring myself to believe her in the sort of precarious condition which poor Mr. Drench chooses to fancy. It seems to me that people who have been ten years and more a-dying, may go on dying for ten years to come."

But *what* has occurred, dear grandmamma, to make you more anxious than usual on poor Mrs. Blair's account?" demanded Justina.

"Nothing *very* particular, my dear,—only this execution!

To be sure, there never *was* anything so dreadful!" faltered the old lady, raising her eyes and hands to Heaven,—almost sincerely.

"*What* execution?" persisted Justina, beginning to be agitated in her turn.

"Why, is it possible, my love, that you have not heard?—There is an execution put in at the Hall, and the sheriff's officers have been in possession since the afternoon!"

Justina rushed to the bell. She hoped to be in time to stop Mrs. Blair's pony chair.

"What on earth are you going to do, Justina?" cried the old lady, perceiving that she was tying on her bonnet.

"Return to The Wilderness if the carriage be not gone," said she. "Mrs. Blair will die, should this sad news be hastily communicated to her. At present she knows nothing. Oh! if I could only reach her in time!"

"My dear, no one would be so cruel as to tell her such a thing," said the old lady, not a little relieved to find from the servant that the carriage had been gone ten minutes. "Besides, I really cannot have you running about the country at this time of night."

"Dear grandmamma, you yourself seemed to think it impossible, just now, but that the news should have already reached her. Her servants will have learned it here. Reflect upon the consequences!"

"No,—I warned John and Mary to be on their guard, in case the thing should not have transpired. No one can possibly see poor Mrs. Blair to-night; and in the morning, you may visit her as early as you please."

With this permission, the anxious girl was forced to content herself, as she retired to her sleepless pillow; and in the silence of the night, painful indeed was it to contemplate the disgrace brought by Reginald upon the threshold of the ancient family of which he was the unworthy representative. In a thousand forms, with a thousand forebodings, did she consider the matter. There was but one chamber in Mrs. Blair's abode that commanded a view of the Hall; at the windows of which, during Reginald's absence aforetime, the fond mother had loved to sit and contemplate the brightness of the setting sun reflected upon the multiplicity of windows of the old pile. Even for some time after his departure for

the continent, she found enjoyment in the contemplation. It was Reginald's roof,—it was Reginald's home on which she was gazing, and there was a soothing influence in the sight.

But when, amid the altered fortunes of the place, it became only too evident that Stoke Paddocks was deserted by its master, she ordered the windows to be closed, and the room was abandoned.

That very morning, however, by one of those instincts that seem to connect our destinies with some vague and mysterious influence whose import is equally inscrutable with the Higher will that "shapes our ends," Mrs. Blair had taken it into her head to repair to the room, and station herself at the forbidden window, leaning upon the arm of Justina. *She* ascribed the caprice to the yearning of a house-ridden heart after a more extensive landscape than was afforded by her view of the garden of The Wilderness, brightened by the revivifying influence of spring. But Justina was now persuaded that some deeper hidden impulse had produced her sudden interest in the spot she had so long dreaded to contemplate.

"Thank Heaven," murmured the kind-hearted girl, as she vainly attempted to dismiss the recollection from her mind,—"Thank Heaven, that, while she stood there, leaning on my shoulder, indulging in such happy visions for the future, she was spared all conjecture of the afflicting event fated to form the climax of her mortifications."

At an earlier hour than any other in the village of Stoke was astir, Justina ascertained that the claim asserted by the sheriff's officers was a bond amounting to eleven hundred pounds, for which Reginald had made himself responsible for Lord Robert Leigh, at the period when the Tyrant of Stoke Paddocks still rejoiced in the name of the Heir and many friends.

It was some comfort to find that no *new* imprudence was the cause of the evil; and she consequently took courage to hasten to the house of Mr. Drench, who was co-executor with her grandmother of the will of the late Vicar, with an earnest entreaty that from a sum of two thousand pounds to which, by virtue of her father's settlements, she was entitled at the age of fourteen, he would satisfy the demand, and

prevent the transaction from coming to the knowledge of his patient at The Wilderness.

"Believe me, I run no risk of losing my money," pleaded she, on his flat refusal to sanction an act so preposterous. "You cannot doubt Mr. Cressingham's eagerness to repay me, the moment this disgraceful business comes to his knowledge."

"I am very far from certain of his ability," replied the prudent apothecary, "and take my word for it, the service you propose would defeat its own purpose. Other executions would follow, in the hope of similar interposition. Rest yourself easy, my dear young lady. Nothing can be done, but to keep the circumstance from the knowledge of Mrs. Blair. You might as well stand on Wertminister Bridge, and try to arrest the course of the Thames, as pretend to stop the ruin and discredit of Reginald Cressingham."

Vainly did Justina reiterate her impoprtunities. Drench stood firm, and their argument was at length interrupted by a summons to him to hasten instantly to The Wilderness.

"I am afraid this abomniable business has transpired," cried he, acceding to Justina's requests to bear him company, "in which case Mrs. Blair will never hold up her head again."

She never did! The event, which the imprudence of servants had betrayed to her knowledge, had already struck her death-blow; and the service required of the apothecary was to restore her to consciousness after a long swoon, from which she was with difficulty recovered, and only to relapse into insensibility.

"Tell him I forgave him!"—were the first rational words she uttered, when at length aware that it was in the arms of her adopted daughter she was so tenderly supported.

"You will see him again and again, to express your own feelings," answered Justina, comprehending all that was comprised in her words. "At present, you are overcome by this sad shock.—You will soon, very soon be better——"

"*Never!*" replied Mrs. Blair, in a hoarse whisper. "I

have borne much suffering. *All* these silent years of mine, have been years of suffering,—years of self-reproach. This last blow has only proved the over-brimming drop in my cup of sorrow."

"At some future time you will experience relief from having been forced to lay aside the mask you must have often found so oppressive," replied her young friend. "When all this is over, dearest Mrs. Blair, you will be more at peace than before."

"It cannot be *over*.—Such stains are indelible," replied the sufferer, waving her head. "And it is all my doing, Justina. It is *I* who am the cause of poor Reginald's ruin. I courted riches for him. As a child, I accepted dependence for him in the house of a cruel, heartless man. When he attained the object of my desires, I seemed to worship him the more,—worship my only son the more—that he was rich and great; and instead of checking his faults, or attempting to mature his judgment, gave way to all his caprices, and allowed him to grow up in utter hardness of heart!—The hardening influence of money destroyed him. As you once said to me, Justina, Reginald was encased from his boyhood in a coat of golden armour, that seemed to prevent all expansion of his natural qualities.—On! my poor son!"—

"Compose yourself, dearest friend," remonstrated Justina, terrified by the wildness of her eye and huskiness of her voice.

"Have I not said that I have forgiven him?" rejoined Mrs. Blair. "If you love me, Justina, pray in your turn, that GOD may forgive *me!*"

It was useless to attempt to lead her to any other train of thought. She was dying,—she knew it,—dying with the home of her only son, within view of her dwelling, in possession of the assertors of the law!

"There is one among the family possessions," faltered the conscience-struck mother, as she became aware of the yet nearer approach of death,—"which even *he* has not been able to expose to shame.—See me laid in the family vault, Justina. Should he ever return, tell him it was *there* I took refuge from the publicity of his disgrace."

She never spoke again.—Vainly was she questioned by

the apothecary and exhorted by the new Vicar; nay, vainly was she caressed with tears of tenderest sympathy by her adopted child.—Her irradiated features betokened joy as she listened to the assuaging words of the priest of her faith,—her yearning eyes expressed grateful affection towards one who had been unto her as a daughter. But ever and anon, her eyes wandered with a terrified glance towards the door of her chamber, as though in expectation of some outrage from the intrusion of the minions of the law. Her mind, perhaps, was already wandering. Better so!—There can be no comfort for the death-bed of a mother tormented by the misdoings of a graceless child.

Justina did not quit her a moment.—In vain was she recalled home by mandates of authority; and in vain did the medical man, after a whole day's watching beside the dying woman, insist that his young friend should desist from a duty beyond her years and strength. Justina stood beside her pillow to the last,—wiped away the dews from her forehead, fanned her fainting form,—and at length closed the eyes, whose fixed, unconscious gaze proclaimed that the world contained a sufferer the less.—

"She has been a mother to *me*, and I will do by her the duty of a daughter!"—said she, in reply to every remonstrance; nor, till the limbs of her friend had been arrayed for the grave, and the coffin lid was closed over her remains did she prepare to quit the house.—

Just as she was departing from the chamber of death, her tearful face muffled in her cloak, and her soul stifled with grief, a stranger appeared at the door from which she was departing.—Justina recoiled with horror.—Recalling to mind the terrors of Mrs. Blair lest some insult should be offered to her in her last moments, as it now appeared she had more than once undergone during her life-time, she fancied that the intruder must be connected with the disgraceful business at the Hall.

His mode of address, however, instantly dispelled her fears. She had ceased to doubt that he was a gentleman, even before, with earnest apologies for his intrusion, he announced himself to be Richard Cressingham.

"A rumour of what was going on at Stoke Paddocks having reached me at my place in Berkshire, where I was

spending the Easter holidays," said he, in explanation of his visit, "I hastened hither to do a kinsman's part by relieving the family and the family place from a stigma, absolutely the result of ill-will and mischief on the part of those employed to act for the absent owner.—All I meditated was to pay off the claim:—I was not advised that a more painful duty awaited me here towards my unfortunate aunt."

"Would that you had arrived in time to soothe her last anxieties by proving that her son still possessed a friend," replied Justina, with a heavy sigh;—"for her death was as devoid of consolation as her life of offence."—

With the kindest deference towards the feelings of one who, though so young, so almost a child, evinced the wisest self-possession in the midst of her afflictions, Mr. Cressingham proceeded to state his intention of remaining at Stoke till after the funeral, which the instructions of Reginald's man of business had appointed indecently soon, in order to obtain earlier possession of The Wilderness; and it was a comfort to Justina to feel that, in Reginald's absence, she was to be countenanced in her last melancholy tribute of respect to the dead, by one whose name commanded such general respect as that of the member for Wilsbury.—

The funeral took place;—and as the procession passed through the park, the first gloomy array of death which had figured there since the gorgeous funeral of Sir Giles Cressingham,—Justina felt a daughter's pride in observing that her benefactress was speeded to her resting-place by the lamentations of the poor; while of the hard-hearted man of fortune, not a single human tear had moistened the pall. She was grateful too that, as the coffin containing the wasted form of that suffering mother was borne past the old Hall, no dishonouring presence brought the scoffer and the hireling to gaze upon her obsequies. A tearful glance towards the grave kinsman of Mrs. Blair, as the funeral glided before the portico towards the little church containing the family monuments of his race, conveyed her thankfulness for his interposition!—

## CHAPTER XIV.

Show me the grave
That I have brought her to. Let me weep there
Till Death himself have pity.

FLETCHER.

A FEW weeks after these distressing events, Justina was loitering, after evening service, in the old church, leaning against the marble balustrade of the monument of a Sir Reginald de Cressingham, beside which was the entrance to the family vault, and musing with many a grievous retrospection upon the sorrows of her whom she had recently seen consigned to that cheerless dwelling,—sorrows all the more bitter for the fond maternal pride which had kept them so long unacknowledged; when a travel-worn, haggard man hurried along the aisle, and threw himself upon the stones of the sepulchre.

That it was Reginald, she could not entertain a doubt; though his dishevelled appearance bore little trace of the fine gentleman of other days; and respecting his anguish, she quietly withdrew from the spot, without venturing to address him.

On arriving, however, at the stile leading from the churchyard towards the Vicarage, it occurred to her that such remorse as must, or ought to be that of Reginald Cressingham, could not be devoid of danger. He was now the murderer of his mother, as before of his own good name; and she fancied that he might rush upon self-destruction as a refuge from the consciousness of his double crime. Retracing her steps, therefore, Justina sat anxiously down in the porch of the old church, and listened, moan by moan, sob by sob, to the tortures of the penitent; until a sudden cessation of his cries suggesting a renewal of her alarm, she hurried back into the chancel, and found him extended, faint and exhausted, on the ground, while the marble effigies standing around, seemed to survey with scorn these bootless tortures of the weakling, the last of their race. Sympathizing in his desolate condition, Justina now drew towards him, took his hand in hers, to whisper the words of comfort and

forgiveness she had gathered from the lips of his dying mother.

"She forgave you and blessed you before she died,"—repeated Justina again and again; and in time, the soothing words were of due effect. By degrees Reginald was able to explain and question in his turn. He had started from the East on the first intimation of an execution having been put into his house,—a sufficient intimation of the unworthiness of the hands to which his affairs were committed, since four years of retrenchment had done so little to extricate them from involvement. But for the cruel intelligence which greeted him the moment he set foot in London he had been utterly unprepared; nor was it till, a few hours afterwards, he made his way to Stoke, he could believe in the reality of that terrible bereavement. So long as his mother survived, there had seemed comfort for him,—hope for him. There was nothing now, and he rushed from The Wilderness to her grave, as if eager to crush both soul and body against the stone that parted him from the dead.

The presence of a mild and patient friend in an hour of affliction so especial, might be accepted as a token that the mercies of Heaven were not yet wholly withdrawn from one who had taken such small account of its benefits. Justina's gentle voice, her silent forbearance, gradually subdued the frenzy of his affliction. He listened almost with satisfaction to her assurances that for many months preceding his mother's sudden dissolution she had enjoyed better health than usual, and more cheering expectations; that she continually talked of him with undiminished affection; and that the unhappy day preceding her release, could alone be said to have proved a season of distress.

All this was but confirmation of the contents of her letters to her son,—letters so fondly describing the consolation derived from the very friend who now sat beside him as a sister, relating with her usual firm but quiet utterance, the evils whereof he had been the cause, and the untiring motherly love with which they had been endured for his sake.

"And you were her only friend!"—he exclaimed at length, clasping his hands with an expression of utter despair. "But for you, her eyes would have been closed by the hands of menials, and her head laid in a neglected grave!"

"She was not so much on that account an object of compassion," remonstrated Justina. "The menials, as you call them, who had so long and faithfully attended her, were to *her* as friends. The kind heart of Mrs. Blair found comfort in their sympathy. Her death was mourned with respect by all who witnessed her blameless life, and with affection by those humbler friends who had seen her, ill and feeble, attend the death-bed of the faithful old nurse of her son. But other tokens of deference awaited her. The chief mourner at your mother's funeral was a man of the highest importance in the eyes of his countrymen,—your cousin, Mr. Cressingham, of Manny Park!"

Reginald started up,—nay, almost recoiled, from the side of his companion.—All that was left in his soul of the leaven of his old pride, rose up against this bitter rebuke.

"Richard Cressingham!" was all he faltered, on hearing the name of one whom he had supplanted in fortune, and who had supplanted *him* in the estimation of the world, by the nobler influence of worth and wisdom. "There needed only this to make me know myself a wretch indeed!——"

"A wretch, indeed, if thus heartless in your appreciation of the service he has rendered you!" cried Justina. "Reginald, Reginald; it was your cousin who defrayed that dishonoring debt,—it was your cousin who redeemed your house from shame,—it was your cousin who caused the head of your mother to be laid with honor in the grave!"

"And you expect me to forgive him such advantages over me!" retorted the humiliated man, smiting his brows, as they sat together under the old porch overlooking the secluded church-yard which formed almost a portion of his park.

"I scarcely expect you to forgive *yourself* for being the cause of his obtaining them!" was her steady reply. "Nevertheless, if you would still testify your love and veneration for your poor mother's memory,—if you would redeem the name of her forefathers from obliquy,—if you would cease to be a fable and disgrace to all belonging to you, I beseech you, lay aside these jealous repinings! You asked me just now *how* you should ever repay my devotion

to your mother. Thus!—Go straight to your cousin.—seek his advice in all that regards your worldly interests. His character for wisdom and uprightness ought to satisfy you that you cannot have a safer counsellor; and richly has he earned your confidence by the promptitude of his service."

Reginald Cressingham replied by a heavy groan.

"I know that I am an inert, selfish fool," he replied. "I know that the mismanagement by which my ruin has been completed would disgrace a child.—*Can* I go and throw myself on the contempt of a man like Richard Cressingham by such confessions?"

"It is the only chance that may enable you to surmount it," persisted Justina. "You are fortunate in having a near kinsman to whose judgment the nation has recourse in its emergencies. Will you be the only one who disdains to seek it?—He extends the olive branch towards you, under circumstances that ought to soften the most obdurate heart.—Can you refuse to accept the pledge?"

Long did Reginald remain absorbed in reflection, and almost sullenly silent.

"Go now,—go at once!" persisted Justina, "Do not enter your own home till you have come to such a decision as will enable you to restore it and yourself to the position you ought to hold. Proceed straight from the grave of your mother to the presence of him by whose manly sensibility it was hallowed. Forgive me if I speak so resolutely, and in a manner perhaps unbecoming my age and our relative position. But I speak in *her* name,—I speak with *her* feelings!—Could she arise from yonder vault, it would be to implore you to be true to yourself, and honor her memory by your own restoration to happiness and respectability."

Such, often reiterated, but reiterated with all the earnestness of faithful regard, were the expostulations which at length determined the prodigal son to arise and seek the interposition of his cousin. He could not have decided more wisely. Richard Cressingham, from his kinsmanship with the ward of Docket,—the Tyrant of Stoke Paddocks,—the butt of Lord Robert Leigh,—the victim of Snapper and Co.,—had more than once been apprized of villanies connected with the affairs of an estate, of which by many he

was supposed to be the heir in tail, and was fully prepared with faith for the grievances of Reginald, and even with data to secure partial redress.

Under his wise and practical counsels, accordingly such measures were adopted for the dismissal of his present men of business and the adjustment of his estate, as inspired even the desponding man with hopes of a gradual extrication.

"Nothing but a degree of wilful blindness, little short of insanity," pleaded the member for Wilsbury, "can account for the manner in which you have suffered yourself to be driven, entanglement by entanglement, into this maze of ruin."

By skilful and persevering investigations, moreover, the clever Cressingham was enabled to trace the early involvements of Reginald to the malversations of his guardian even beyond his surmises. The honorable member for Llanstephen proved to be the real holder of many of those claims upon the property, which had arisen out of advances at an exorbitant rate of interest;—and the dread of exposure such as must have levelled to the dust even *his* well-constructed temple of plausibility, proved the means of enabling the new solicitors to strike out such plans of sure but gradual payment, as assigned to the proprietor of Stoke Paddocks an income fully enabling him to maintain his family respectability at the Hall.

But from this, the good feeling of Reginald recoiled. He determined to settle at The Wilderness, and cause the old mansion to stand uninhabited, a memento ever before his eyes of his folly and prodigality, till his whole estate should be retrieved.—The Wilderness was enough for happiness;—The Wilderness, hallowed by remembrances of his mother, and sentiments of early friendship, was a home that sufficed his modified ambition.

"And now," said Richard Cressingham, one day, when, many months after their reconciliation, he was putting the finishing stroke to the organization of these projects,—"may I in return for my good offices, my dear Reginald, request your interposition where you seem to hold the influence of a brother?—I am a plain spoken fellow, as becomes one who is too much a man of figures to pretend to be a man of figure. I have long been wanting a wife; without

much leisure on my hands for the arduous task of hunting out, in worldly circles, such a companion as would sweeten my toils as a public man, without finding her own embittered by my gravity. Such a person,—(but in a form, heaven knows, and gifted with superiority of sense and feeling, I had despaired of finding united!) have I found in your village of Stoke. Try therefore, I entreat you, whether you cannot assist me in persuading her to demonstrate her affection for your poor mother, by restoring to the home where Sophia Cressingham first saw the light, all that it has so long wanted of female illustration!"—

Poor Reginald, who was beginning to feel that the one thing wanting to the perfecting of his new projects of happiness, was the hope of recommending himself as a husband to one who had so lightly regarded him as the man of fortune, could scarcely repress a cry of despair as he listened to a demand so well founded; and admitted the impossibility that the hand of the member for Wilsbury should be rejected by so wise a girl as Justina, or a man so well established as Cressingham of Manny Park, by Justina's grandmother.

"You will need no recommendation of mine," said he, in a faltering voice. "A marriage so perfectly assorted cannot fail to meet the wishes of all parties."

"Nay," replied his cousin,—on whom the tremulous voice and whitening cheek of poor Reginald were not thrown away,—"do not say *all* parties. I see how it is, my dear fellow! I was not aware of this attachment. I fancied your tastes and predilections of a more worldly nature. I will think no more of the business. Not a word has ever yet escaped my lips to any other than yourself; nor am I young enough, idle enough, or enough in love, to suppose that the world may not contain elsewhere a partner equally suitable for me, whom I may marry without the self-reproach of having broken a tenderer heart than my own."

Reginald, however, was not to be outdone in generosity. He insisted upon laying the wishes of his cousin distinctly and earnestly before one whom they honored, and whose happiness he knew must be secured by an alliance so unexceptionable. Of his own aspirings,—his own ardent affections,—he uttered not a syllable; nor was it till some time

had elapsed after the decided though grateful refusal of one whose prospects in life rendered her no ineligible match even for the squire of Manny Park, relieved him of his scruples, that Reginald by degrees began to insinuate his ardent desire of converting her long and consistent friendship into a warmer sentiment.

"You used to tell me, dearest Justina, that I should never have a friend;—I have found one in the man I most detested! You used to tell me I should never have an opinion of my own; will you not accept my fervent attachment as a proof to the contrary?" whispered Reginald, as he pressed his suit upon the playmate of his childhood, who listened without any apparent reluctance. But whatever her secret joy at finding herself beloved by one for whom her own affection had grown with her growth, she was not so much the slave of her feelings as to accept the good intentions of Reginald Cressingham as a sufficient assurance of his reformation. His natural instability of character suggested caution. Justina knew that he had been on the point of sacrificing his pride for an interested marriage;—he might perhaps, feel it a greater sacrifice now, though now renounced at a higher instigation. She chose, therefore, to assure herself by experience whether the alteration of his views and habits were likely to prove permanent, and demanded time for the trial.

The probation, however, was not to be of a very barbarous nature. Residing in the same village, meeting every day of their lives, the two years' engagement on which she insisted as a token of his sincerity, served only to endear to each other two persons worthy of a mutual attachment; and though the death of the Vicar's widow within a year of the period originally appointed for their union, afforded a fair excuse to Justina for accelerating the event, she was firm in requiring that her eighteenth year should be accomplished ere she gave her hand to the object of her first affections. May the docility with which the Tyrant of Stoke Paddocks submitted to the decree of his fair despot, be accepted as sufficient evidence of his amended temper!

The two years wore to an end—It was a very happy wedding—it promises to be a very happy marriage. Mrs. Cressingham, by the devotion of her handsome fortune to

the further extrication of the estate of Stoke Paddocks, has earned the gratitude of her husband by placing him in the all but unencumbered enjoyment of his fine income; and the son and heir born to them last year, saw the light under the roof of the old Hall, in all its former dignity and pride; when, for the first time, Reginald took part in the rejoicings of the village of Stoke, and heard the bob-majors pealed in his honor. But for the recollection that she who would so fondly have rejoiced in the sound had been deprived by his follies of the enjoyment of a tranquil old age, he would not at that moment have had a sorrow in the world!

Such people as Lord Holmeswell, Sir Henry Morton, and Bob Leigh, laughed heartily at the announcement of his marriage with the granddaughter of the old Vicar, regarding it as confirmation of their former verdict, that "it was all up with poor Cress!"—But the honorable position now maintained in his county by Cressingham of Stoke Paddocks, and the friendship of a happy circle of good and honorable families, who readily overlooked the early follies of a man, for whose reform no less a person than the member for Wilsbury deigned to stand sponsor, afforded all the society and distinction wanted in former days to the respectability of the family place. Even the houses of Granton and Beaconsfield have discovered, with profit to themselves, that Stoke is within visiting distance.

Athanasius Docket, meanwhile, having fallen into disgrace with his party upon the discovery of his negotiations with government for the governorship of one of the new South Sea Colonies, was thrown out of Parliament at the late election; and is said to be on the point of sailing for Australia, where he has invested a considerable portion of his ill-gotten gains. In England, his career was crushed. He was observed never to hold up his head in the House from the moment he was unable to confront the contemptuous smile of the honorable member for Wilsbury.

The ill-omened old beech tree of Sir Giles Cressingham has been levelled with the lawn; and all the cogitations of Reginald now occur under the spreading branches of the oak sacred to Justina. It may consequently be inferred that they are not of a very gloomy nature; and that, under the prudent guidance of such parents, the *present* "Heir"

will become worthy of "many friends;"—and trained in sentiments of honor sobered by honesty, and generosity tempered by prudence, he will, at some future period, accredit the responsible position of a "MAN OF FORTUNE."

# ANGO, OR THE MERCHANT PRINCE.

## PART I.

NORMANDY may be numbered among the countries which have sent forth their people to conquer and colonize, leaving the fatherland to degenerate into insignificance. The magnificence of its ruined castles and venerable cathedrals attests the ancient importance of the Duchy; and there are episodes of its history during the middle ages, tinctured with the wildest characteristics of romance.

The power and glory of the maritime republics of Italy, as recorded by historians, would probably appear fabulous, but for the survival of those marble palaces, whose mildewed galleries and echoing halls attract the wanderings of the traveller to the Lagunes of Venice, or the Bay of Genoa. The romantic history of the Foscari and the Dorias, is more authentically writ in marble than in historical annals; and even the memory of Venetian Doges, personally insignificant, is embalmed in the choicest sanctuaries of poetry and art. But what remains in the paltry unaspiring little town of Dieppe to inspire belief in the legend that, while Wolsey was immortalizing himself in England, as the founder of colleges and patron of Holbein, a simple burgess of a poor fishing-town of Normandy not only raised himself to princely opulence by the boldness of his commercial speculations,

but had the courage to make war, single-handed, upon the King of Portugal; and the refinement to procure artists from Italy for the adornment of his villa upon the rugged Norman coast? Such, however, were the feats of John Ango; who, in the year 1530, had brought the port of Dieppe into a condition rivalling that of the maritime republics, and his name into competition with the names of Doges and Kings.

Ango was a native of the little borough so largely indebted to his munificence.—The only son of a rich shipowner, who had raised himself, by industry, from the humble condition of a mariner of the Pollet, young Ango was despatched by his father, at an early age, on various expeditions, likely to rouse, in an enterprising mind, the spirit of maritime adventure. It was the golden age of discovery. Every sovereign in Europe, and many independent states, were arming vessels, with a view of enlarging their possessions at the expense of the "Dusky men of Ind," instead of their European neighbors; and Ango, while pursuing his father's mercenary speculations of traffic, became inspired with ardour to emulate the feats of Cabot or Columbus. From the the middle of the fourteenth century—full sixty years before the commencement of the enterprises of Portugal—the port of Dieppe, in conjunction with the city of Rouen, had engaged in voyages of discovery and speculation on the Guinea coast. By them was the name of Cap Vert first bestowed upon the woody headland, afterwards distinguished by the Portuguese as Cape Verd; while the first European stetlement formed in Africa, was named Petit Dieppe, by the French discoverers from a supposed resemblance to the position of their native town.

In 1402, Bethancourt, a Norman gentleman, conquered and proclaimed himself sovereign of the Canary Islands; and, in the East, the discovery of Sumatra was, about the same time, effected by Parmentier, a Dieppois captain, whose journals are still extant. But although discoveries and conquests may be effected by the enterprise of individuals, the resources of a sovereign state are indispensible to keep up the colonial establishments necessary to their preservation. The Dieppois adventurers, attacked by the armaments of the King of Portugal, were soon compelled to

resign their Oriental conquests, and content themselves with bringing home, from the Guinea coast, cargoes of gold dust, pepper, and, above all, of elephants' teeth, which they were soon instructed to turn to such good account in carving and sculpture; their hereditary proficiency in which elegant art, still constitutes one of the chief resources of the town. There are carvings in ivory in existence, of the choicest beauty, known to have been produced by the Dieppois, in the reign of Francis I; and their fine Gothic church of St. Jacques still possesses a curious bas-relief of considerable length, bearing the date 1530, and composed of the figures of Indians, Asiatic and American; of negroes, and the natives of Madagascar; surrounded with characteristic attributes and the chief productions of their several countries; a relic which suffices to prove that the Dieppois were not only familiar with the aspect of the newly discovered countries, but that they possessed sculptors capable of perpetuating their configuration.

Thirty years previous to the erection of this curious trophy, the father of John Ango was the first to arm vessels for the formation of an establishment on the coast of Newfoundland. But, though baffled in his intentions of maintaining a permanent colony, he continued to despatch an annual fleet to the northern coasts; and, enriched by the monopoly of the cod fishery, soon attained such opulence as inspired the mind of his son with still higher ambitions. It was not enough that, from the windows of his father's rude mansion on the port of Dieppe, John Ango beheld his vessels ranged in order, with hundreds of mariners wearing on their sleeves the initials of his father, engaged in unlading the precious commodities collected from different quarters of the world. On a recent expedition to the Levant, John Ango had been forced by stress of weather into an Italian port; and, profiting by the occasion, had visited, during the refitting of his dismasted vessel, the cities of Rome and Naples. The aspect of so much splendor, so much refinement, produced in a powerful mind, wholly uncultivated, a degree of excitement almost alarming. Dazzled, intoxicated, bewildered, John Ango lost sight of all but his personal gratification; and having surrendered the command of his father's merchant ship to a mate, his elder in years and ex-

perience and possessed of old Ango's confidence, he suffered the *Royal Charles* to proceed on its voyage.

The spell-bound youth resolved to live and die among the enchantments of Naples. To devote the high faculties he was conscious of possessing to the pursuit of serious study, was an effort beyond the philosophy of one-and-twenty. After passing his boyhood in traffic with the natives of Madagascar, Malacca, and Labrador, to be suddenly familiarized with the fine forms of Italy, the glories of ancient sculpture, and the awakening beauties of a new era of triumph for the arts, was as the effect of enchantment. His life was now passed in frequenting the studios of those painters whose names are familiar in the mouths of men as those of the greatest statesmen or conquerors; and in visiting the gorgeous fanes risen and rising under the auspices of the accomplished Princes of Italy. He beheld Florence, resplendent under the sceptre of the Medici, Milan, Genoa, Venice, Rome; and his young heart thrilled with luxurious delight at beholding surpassed the illusions of his boyish dreams.

Ango's first impulse, however, was that of grief and mortification, at knowing his destinies to be fixed in an inclement northern climate, in an impoverished province, among rude uncultivated men, destined to war with nature for their daily bread, to traverse trackless seas, and dispute with savages for the produce of more prolific countries. His next reflection was that of higher inspiration. He might become the father of his country, the Cosmo de Medicis of Dieppe. By the accumulation of still greater wealth, in addition to the fortunes of his father, he might acquire the power of transporting to his northern home the arts and elegance of Italy.

It was an epoch of universal improvement. Charles V, Henry VIII, Francis I, were effecting for their several kingdoms, all that royal patronage *can* effect for the advancement of learning and civilization; and Ango, who, with deep pity for the rudeness of his countrymen, had the utmost faith in their capacity, doubted not that his exertions for the improvement of his native town would be crowned with success, if not in his own time, at least in that of a succeeding generation. Indignant rather than mortified at

his ignorance, he determined to become the patron of the revival of letters and the arts in the Duchy of Normandy; the rival of his Sovereign Prince; nay, perhaps, himself an ennobled and dangerous subject. At present, he was but Ango the mariner, an individual disqualified to figure in the Courts of Kings. He would make himself heard of as an influencer of the destinies of mankind. He would command rather than solicit preferment. Such were the anticipations which, after the lapse of fourteen months, determined him to submit to his father's decree, that he should either embark instantly at Leghorn, in a brig armed expressly for the purpose of bringing back the prodigal son; or forfeit all expectation of sharing with his sister Genevieve the fortunes of his family. Prepared for the parernal reprobation he should have to encounter on landing at Dieppe, Ango summoned his patience to listen with becoming humility to the invectives of the coarse old seaman, his father, and the tedious homilies of a mother who retained the costume, habits, and language of a Poltaise; a tribe exhibiting, within bow-shot of the town of Dieppe, a peculiar dialect, dress, and mode of existence, attesting the truth of the legend, that the inhabitants of the Pollet are colonists from some Mediterranean port.

On arriving at home, however, the anticipations of the young truant were agreeably disappointed. He found, indeed, the same rude fare, the same bare walls, brick floor, and naked rafters; the pride of the rich shipowner being invested rather in the greatness of his argosies, than in the effeminacies of luxurious life. But he found no harshness—he met with no reproaches. Long absence pleaded powerfully in his favour. The simple-hearted mother, who wept upon his neck, had feared never again to behold her only son; and it was impossible even for the iron-nerved old mariner to refrain from a tear of joy, when he looked upon the comely youth who had brought from more civilized cities a bearing and address, such as had never been seen in Dieppe, since Robert the Norman held his Court in the Castle of Arques.

There was one member of the family, meanwhile, who regarded the graces of the new comer with a less favourable eye. Genevieve Ango, unlettered as her mother, and

strong-hearted as her father, was disposed to treat with contempt the new-fangled habits of life, of which even her intelligent brother's description could scarcely enable her to form a correct idea. With the prejudice of ignorance, Genevieve was a staunch opponent of all innovation. "Let us live as our fathers lived," was the proverbial saying of one who saw not that the labours of the father are intended to improve the condition of the child. Ignorant of all beyond the walls of her native place, Genevieve was unable to estimate by their results the advantages of education and refinement. She knew only that the forefathers of her parents had lived and died virtuous and respected, in the fear of God and veneration of the King, without greater knowledge of men or things than was to be gathered on the shores of the harbour, by the exercise of their eyes and ears. A more extended education she conceived to belong exclusively to the priesthood, to enable them the better to expound to their flock the mysteries of their salvation. The tales unfolded by her brother of the merchant Princes of Italy, with their marble palaces, their galleries of profane pictures and statues, and orchestras of profane music, Genevieve regarded with contempt. The chorus of Poltaise fishermen, on summer afternoons, comprised her notions of harmony; and as to carving and picture-making, to apply such luxurious arts to aught save the adornment of the altars of God and his saints, appeared to the simple-minded Dieppoise, flat blasphemy. At length, finding that his mother sat crossing herself, and that his sister listened with a contemptuous smile to his narratives of the wonders of Italy, he refrained from all further allusion to a theme so little suited to their apprehensions, and devoted himself, heart and soul, to the furtherance of his father's commercial speculations. *There* lay his hopes of wealth, of aggrandisement, of happiness!

Old Ango, however, was not the man to listen to the suggestions of a stripling. Unskilled to appreciate the high intelligence of his son, the grey-headed Dieppois made it a point of religion to adopt none of the improvements suggested by the travels of his son. Just as his wife and daughter preferred listening to the wondrous tales of savage men, "gorgons, hydras, and chimeras dire," brought back

by Ango's captains from Mozambique or the Spice Islands, to all the descriptions of the Vatican, hazarded by their travelled kinsman, the old adventurer chose to adhere to the simple science of hydrography cultivated by the Norman sailors, rather than emerge into the novel principles imbibed by his son in the nautical schools of Genoa or Venice. With the old ways, he had prospered. By them his vessels had been enabled to confront the tornados and typhoons of tropical climates. His crews had evaded those floating mountains of ice, still as apocryphal to the conceptions of the greater part of Europe as modern tales of the sea-serpent or kraken. He cared nothing to learn the processes of the dockyards of the Doges. The main point was to see his cargoes of codfish encumbering the market-place, and to find his rich bales of spices embalming the warehouses on the Pollet.

Reluctantly did John Ango cede to the dominion of parental authority. The good man, his father, waxed old. It was needless to fret his soul by opposition. The time would come when he should be at liberty to pursue, on a more extended and enlightened scale, the system which had rendered the name of Ango familiar in the ears of the merchants of the Eastern, and the adventurers of the Western hemispheres.

A stormy point, meanwhile, remained to be discussed between the father and son. It was the earnest desire of old Ango to behold the heir of his wealth wedded to the only child of one of the richest landowners in the neighbourhood of Dieppe; nor did the disgust manifested by the accomplished traveller at the coarseness of mind and manners exhibited by the buxom Norman heiress, induce him to relinquish his purpose. Already the family quarrel ran high; and Genevieve, to whom her brother had confided that a love engagement in Italy rendered impossible the alliance projected by his family, made it a matter of conscience to apprize her brother that, in case of his persisting in his refusal, their father was likely to concentrate his riches in a single bequest to herself. Even this menace availed not. John Ango felt that, with the helpmate provided for him, his ambitious projects would lose their charm; and he was on the point of breaking into open rebellion,

when a fall in his own dockyard accelerated the end of the infirm old man. The elder Ango was conveyed to his eternal rest in the church of St. Jacques; and the younger commenced a public career, which was to afford his name a permanent inscription in the annals of his native country.

The first anxiety of his sister arose from alarm lest her positive and somewhat arrogant brother might be tempted to visit upon the aged widow the part she had taken in promoting, by menaces and severity, a marriage distasteful to her son. She feared that the young man, on whom had devolved, according to the usance of the country, the entire inheritance of an intestate father, might be moved to eject from his new home the venerable woman whose habits and opinions were so little in accordance with his own. Her brother differed so totally from herself in views and principles, that Genevieve could deduce no inference from the tone of her own feelings, and knew not to what extent his resentment might be carried. But that she feared he might suppose her solicitous for her own destinies, she would have hastened to implore him not to infringe the imperative duties of filial respect.

There was, however, nothing to fear. John Ango not only requested his mother to remain mistress of the establishment over which she had so long presided, but made an immediate deed of gift, conveying his ancestral house to his sister on the demise of their surviving parent, signifying his intention of erecting for himself a mansion in better accordance with the state of their altered fortune; and in a short period after his father's decease, not only were a dozen vessels of superior construction in progress in his dockyard, but the foundations were already laid of that princely habitation which, till the bombardment of Dieppe, drew strangers from all countries to admire the rich carving and emblazonments of the "House of Ango."

To the surprise of his fellow-townsmen, who already looked to him for support in all their public enterprises, Ango, instead of remaining on the spot to watch the progress of his property, was ever journeying to Rouen, to Caen, and even to Paris, for the prosecution of new commercial speculations. Not satisfied with arming privateers, and despatching ships to every port of Europe or Asia, he contrived to recommend

himself to the favour of the Archbishop of Rouen, the celebrated Cardinal d'Amboise; and obtained, through his recommendation at court, the monopoly of salt and grain, the comptrollership of the harbour of Dieppe, and other privileges of vast importance. He next undertook the receivership of the revenues of the Duchy of Longueville, and farmed the Abbey lands of Fescamp and St. Blaise, as well as those of various secular signiories of the Caux district. The prodigious command of money thus secured to him, placed all the markets of the neighbourhood in his hand: every day the population of Dieppe began to feel itself more and more dependent on the good offices of Ango.

Unchanged in the courtesy of his deportment towards those who sought his protection, the young adventurer had already won golden opinions from his early associates. They admired his intelligence and energy, and took pride in his pretensions. It was but his sister Genevieve who trembled for the results of his audacity, not only as influencing his fortunes, but his character.

"Ango is growing too proud, and it is written that pride shall have a fall!" argued the Polletaise maiden. "What better is my brother than the mother who bore him, that he must needs have a dwelling-house carved with dainty devices, when one formed of the rough and rugged stone sufficeth his father's widow?—His garments are not fashioned like those of this country. His tongue affecteth a foreign idiom. I tremble for John Ango!"

It was in the midst of such misgivings that she was accosted by the object of her reverie, who came to bid farewell to his family, as on the eve of a journey of importance.

"My homestead is all but complete," said he. "The tapestry-makers appointed to furnish it for my use, will be here anon from Rouen. Have sometimes an eye to them, Genevieve, during my absence."

"I will take heed that there shall be neither wastery or riot among your people," replied Genevieve. "But——"

"Take heed rather that there be no sparing or parsimony to prevent my new habitation from becoming, as I would fain have it, a cage for a Phœnix, a new wonder of the world!" interrupted her brother. "I would have men say,

as they steer into the harbor of Dieppe, I come to behold the palace of John Ango."

Genevieve shrugged her shoulders impatiently. "And whither are you bound, then," said she, "that you leave such grave charges in your sister's hands? To the Moluccas, in your good ship the *Salamander*, or to Siam in your *Royal Dieppois*? The season scarce holds for the north-western coast."

"Trouble not your mind for my goings or comings," interrutpted her brother, with a smile. "My errand is simply to bring home a white dove of peace to my sea-gull's nest."

"You are bound to Italy, then!" cried Genevieve, starting up and clapping her hands; then suddenly relapsing into mournfulness—"I fancied—I trusted," quoth she, "that you had abandoned so mad a quest!"

"Abandoned my every hope of earthly happiness?" cried the young man with enthusiasm. "Abandon *her* who, for the three last mortal years, hath been my dream by night, my thought by day? For whom but my Bianca have I reared yonder mansion? For whom but my Bianca have I striven to elevate my station and augment my means? But that I cared not to bring home a daughter of the noble house of Riario to a smoky hovel of Dieppe, already had I passed the Bay of Biscay to bear hither in our own fair galley the lovely lady of my thoughts. I chose not that my blessed Bianca should step upon a coarser footcloth than in her uncle's palace; and lo! my preparations are achieved—my plans complete. Within six weeks, dear Genevieve, I shall be here again, to place a sister in your gentle bosom."

"A sister who will despise both me and mine!" said Genevieve, in a tone of deep despondency. "Nay, in lieu of gaining a sister, I shall perchance lose my brother. This daughter of a princely line may be influenced by the power of love to wed John Ango, the son of a Norman fisherman; but the impulse which blinds her to the humiliation of such an alliance, will not render her insensible to the homeliness of his family. She will despise the untutored mother, the unletterered sister; and our household happiness is gone for ever! Nay, although the persuasions of the voice she

loves may have induced the damsel to overlook the distance between her high estate and that of her Norman suitor, when she comes hither and beholds him in active truth the mate of petty traders, the kinsman of humble mariners of the Pollet, she will surely grieve at having exchanged her patrician name for the degrading appellation of Madame Ango!"

"Her husband may, perhaps, shortly achieve a more honorable title for her acceptance," rejoined Ango, turning lightly on his heel; and, before Genevieve could ask an explanation of his words, he had strained her in a parting embrace. During the tedious five months of his absence from Dieppe, often did she ponder over his saying. But she had none to whom to turn for explanation. She could not call to mind that Ango was familiar with any. He was rather gracious than friendly towards his young fellow-townsmen. He vouchsafed them his aid, but never his confidence. With her mother, a woman of threescore years and ten, oppressed with infirmities, it was no longer possible to commune; and Genevieve chose rather to divert her thoughts from her brother's mysterious communication by watching over the completion of his splended mansion, which was now constantly surrounded by an admiring throng of the Dieppois, clapping their hands, and crying aloud with exultation—"Ango—Ango!"

At length, one fine autumnal morning, signal was given in the port that the fine galley in which Ango had embarked for the Mediterranean, was in sight.—The next tide brought her into harbor; and the next hour the bridegroom into the arms of his sister, who was waiting in the porch of his dwelling to welcome the Italian bride Ango's brow was for a moment crimsoned with vexation, to perceive that Genevieve, on even, so momentous an occasion,had disdained to lay aside her uncouth Norman costume. But,on glancing a second time towards her, he was fain to admit that the fine expressive turn of her countenance was sufficient adornment. At this moment, her eyes were fixed upon the person of her new sister-in-law with such rapt and intense admiration, that it was impossible for the young bridegroom to do less than press her a second time in his arms in token of gratitude.

The Lady Bianca was in truth, the loveliest creature that had ever set foot on the Norman shore; and Genevieve no longer wondered at the repugnance which had prevented her brother from taking to his bosom the coarse-featured heiress of St. Martin le Gaillard. The only fault which Ango's sister could detect, and it was a fault that necessarily increased in importance when they came to abide together, was the impossibility of reading the nature of her sentiments in her serene eyes and unvarying countenance. Imperturbable mildness, or, it might be, immovable resolution, seemed pictured in her gentle face. She gazed with a smile of unconcern upon the rich preparations completed for her reception; and the sanguine heart of Ango was disappointed when he saw how little that of his bride was interested in the gorgeous carvings and emblazonments which had taxed all the choicest artists of Normandy to bring them to perfection. He took no heed of the diminutive proportions of his dwelling, compared with the stately pride of the Palazzo Riario; or, that the walls of her uncle's house, instead of being adorned by quaint carvings in mood, shone with the luminous inspirations of Raphael and Leonardo. Even the exotic flowers, the orange and pomegranate blossoms, which Genevieve had procured at immense cost from Paris to impart to her new sister's bower chamber the fragrance and and aspect of her native climate, were weeds in the Sicilian gardens of the father of Bianca.

There were objects, however, wholly new to the experience of the young stranger which soon captivated her attention. The Gothic magnificence of the old church of St. Remy; the tall white cliffs at whose base the chafing tides of the northern seas threw up their snowy surf; the rich pastures of the pastoral valley of Arques, green and leafy, beyond all experience of the Neapolitan maiden; all these impressed her with some degree of admiration for the little Norman nook in which her future existence was to wear away.

But she felt that it *was* to "wear away." Tenderly attached to the enthusiastic Ango, she had made the sacrifice of her patrician splendors cheerfully; but not without the full consciousness of having made it. But she did not,

for a moment, forget that she, who was the daughrer of Prince Riario, the Sicilian noble, was now the wife of Ango, captain of a rude armament of Norman privateers.

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## PART II.

TEN years elapsed. The lovely bride of eighteen became the matron and mother of eight-and-twenty; and the dark-haired Genevieve, her elder only by a year, was now a nun among the sisters of St. Mary, in a small convent on the shore, beside the fortress of the Pollet. It was not without deep regret that Ango beheld his only sister retire from the world in which his now miraculously advancing fortunes were become a wonder for the admiration of mankind. He had wished to see her nobly wedded; and not a few among the spendthrift seigneurs of Normandy had pretended to the hand of one so highly gifted by nature, and so lavishly endowed by her brother with worldly riches. But Genevieve was inflexible. Though conscious of no peculiar vocation for the cloister, she felt that she was equally ill adapted for the struggles of the great world.

"There was a time," said she, in reply to the remonstrances of her brother, "when I flattered myself of being so strong in mind as to despise distinctions of rank or education. I confess my weakness. To persist in my resolution of wedding with one of my own degree, some rude captain of the port, is an effort of prudence of which I am no longer capable. But it is not your influence, dear brother, which hath wrought this change in my feelings. Your ambitions appear to me now, as heretofore, monstrous and disproportionate. It is rather the society of my sweet sister, the converse, the instruction, the acquirements I have derived from her affectionate care, that have placed me in a false position. My soul is no longer able to find its happiness in the society of the rude and simple-minded, who are my own people; while the lowness of my birth equally disqualifies me for any higher alliance. The nobles, with one of whom you

urge me to wed, would one day or other afflict me by some contumelious expression ; while I, in some hasty moment, might be moved to reproach the want of breeding and information of him who was my childhood's playmate, and whom I long purposed should become my husband. All these harassments will cease when, devoted to the service of God, I pass my future days between the charitable duties undertaken by the sisters of Mary, and the studies to which the rules of the order permit me to apply my leisure."

Such were the explanations given by Genevieve to her family ; and Ango and his wife were too well acquainted with the sternness of her resolution, to have any hope of swaying her from her purpose. It was some comfort that she had chosen the least rigorous of the orders established in Normandy, which sanctioned their admittance to her presence on days set apart for the purpose ; and, as the convent was within view of the magnificent habitation in which Ango now abided, or rather reigned like a prince, scarcely a week elapsed but one of her kindred, in flowing robes of earthly pride, sat beside the poor nun in her cell of humiliation.

Dear to her heart, even in its abstraction from the things of this world, were those continued tokens of affection ; more especially, now that Ango's young son was advancing in boyhood ; and when, accompanied only by the preceptor, who, being alien to the recluse, was forced to leave him on the threshold of the cloister, young Theodore came to visit her, apparently intent upon seeking from her lips lessons of wisdom likely to afford an antidote to the evil influences with which pride and ostentation had surrounded his infancy, Sister Genevieve's heart expanded with joy. The boy seemed to flee to the counsels of the mild and tranquil nun, as a refuge from the vain tumults of his father's house. The happiest day of his week was that on which he was ferried across the harbor, and conducted to the humble portal of the sisters of St. Mary. How strange a contrast to the marble vestibule, thronged with menials wearing the liveries and cognizance of Ango, through which he had to pass on his return !

Soon, however, Sister Genevieve began to fear that her

growing influence over her nephew was distasteful to his mother; for already her highborn sister-in-law was relaxing in her attentions to the recluse. More than a month sometimes elapsed between her visits; but how was it to be wondered at? The nun, in her gentle forbearance, reminded herself how hard it must be to Bianca to tear herself from her luxurious tiring-chamber, with its velvet hangings, Venetian mirrors set in frames of silver filigree, carpets of rich tapestry, and ceilings of carved and emblazoned oak, to descend into the damp and naked cell of a convent! She fancied she could behold Bianca seated by her bower-window, while two girls of Mozambique (brought over by one of Ango's captains as a tribute to his lady and mistress) stood behind her chair, to pick up the book or tapestry-needle she might let fall, or, in the summer heats, to raise a gentle air around her with their Indian fans. She fancied she saw her at the banquet table, with minstrels and trouveres in attendance, according to the custom of the house singing strains in homage to her beauty. She fancied she saw her before her stately toilet-table, while goldsmiths, summoned from Paris by Ango, tried upon her velvet bodice or damasked coif the effect of certain sparkling clasps of diamonds and rubies, which her husband had bespoken as toys to amuse her leisure.

"Pray Heaven so much prosperity harden not her heart!" was the secret ejaculation of Sister Genevieve. "Of all the trials which beset our mortal nature, the ordeal of riches and greatness is the most perilous to salvation. It is easier for a camel to pass through a needle's eye, than for persons endowed like Ango and his wife to enter into the kingdom of heaven!"

With one evidence of her brother's growing riches and growing pride, the poor nun was at present unacquainted. Having purchased from the ruined family of Longueil their beautiful signiory of Varengeville, on the shore, two leagues below Dieppe, Ango had demolished the ruinous old castle, the residence, in more troublous times, of the lords of the soil; and was erecting, in its stead, a fair manor-house of stone and marble, after the manner of the Italian villas he had admired in his travels; to execute the frescos and sculptures for which he had brought sculptors from Rome;

not satisfied with the artists who were executing, at Fontainbleau and St. Germain en Laye, for his sovereign lord the King, those fine works which have come down to our time. Ango, the Dieppois, chose that the inspired country of his lovely wife should furnish the devices and adornings of a dwelling which was to be bestowed upon her as a dower-house for her especial use. The incongruity of these refinements with a rude Norman village, overgrown with huge timber-trees, and overrun by luxuriant vegetation, so that no cool refreshment of marble or fountains was needed as in the burning climate of the Sicilies, did not occur to him. It was the vain display of magnificence to which he aspired, rather than the comfort of the future dwellers at Varengeville.

As yet, Ango had said nothing to his sister of his new manor-house; partly from motives of delicacy, because he suspected that, had Genevieve consented to ally herself with the nobility to her native province, of all the suitors for her hand, the unfortunate Baron de Longueil would have been the object of her preference; and partly because he feared that her simple taste would reprove the newfangledness of his notions. But the boy Theodore told all. Enchanted with the beauty of the ancient groves and new gardens of Varengeville, he loved to describe to his aunt the progress of the foreign artists, and the narratives of the marvels of Italy, of which his familiarity with his mother's language enabled him to converse with the strangers.

"Be not deceived," was the reply of the nun; "the things you tell of, which Ango would fain naturalize in Normandy, are unsuitable to our boisterous province. These images of heathen deities, planted on pedestals among thickets of flowers, may be appropriate in a climate where scarcely a gentle breeze disturbs the ethereal tranquillity of the spot, and the landscape is as a temple consecrated to Divine nature. But here, amid our ocean tempests, when, on awaking in the morning, we find dwellings swept away by the raging of midnight winds which in the evening were left steadfast and secure, what rational being would set up, on slender pedestals, vases and statues to be overthrown? These painted frescos of Varengeville, which artists have travelled thousands of leagues to create, must soon be en-

crusted with mildew, the spontaneous growth of our humid climate; and scornful men will point the finger thereat, and deride the short-sightedness of Ango. As well attempt to cultivate the vines of Gascony upon our cliffs, as naturalize the villeggiatura of a Sicilian atmosphere on our coast."

Young Theodore listened gravely to the arguments of the nun. The pleasure he had hitherto taken in the decoration of his father's noble manor, was moderated by this exposition of the unfitness of things apparent at Varengeville: nor was this the only point on which the lessons of Sister Genevieve countervailed those of the parents of the boy. Bianca, elevated by her husband's eminence, as chief citizen of Dieppe and master of a vast armament of privateers, to a condition even more distinguished than that of the daughter of a Neapolitan noble, having resumed her early habits of arrogance, failed not to instil into her son the notion that, on his mother's side, he was come of a princely house; and that, by following up the enterprises and courtiership of his father, he might in time achieve, in his own person, the honours of nobility; while the nun, at once humble and high-minded, bad him hold himself above such empty distinctions, and regard mere opulence as a treasure entrusted to his stewardship for the benefit of his fellow-creatures, and the honour of God.

It was her delight to perceive that the learning and accomplishments instilled into her nephew, by the professors enlisted in Ango's service, served to enlighten and strengthen the mind of the promising youth, without hardening his heart. All her earthly hope was in Theodore. Her brother she looked upon as carried away by the vastness of his ambitions; a vessel freighted beyond its strength, and in hourly peril of shipwreck.

Such was the frame of her mind when, just as Theodore attained the eve of his eighteenth year, Ango, who now rarely visited his sister, made his appearance one evening in her cell. Splendid as were now his habits and his garb, Genevieve was startled when, on raising her eyes from the work in which she was engaged (a stole, embroidered with chain needlework, for the service of the altar of St. Remy,) she saw the stately citizen standing beside her, wearing, in a belt of gold, a dagger, the hilt of which was studded with

jewels. A thought glanced into Genevieve's mind of their poor humble father, who, in the extremity of his wealth, had aspired to nothing beyond the leathern belt and doublet of broad blue cloth, peculiar to the burghers of Dieppe. Silk, velvet, or brocade, he would have treated as effeminate trivialities, unworthy the notice of a man of the sea.

"Whither comest thou, so bravely attired?" said the nun her eyes having fallen again upon her work, so that she had not space to notice that the joyous and triumphant expression of her brother's countenance was more than in accordance with the brilliancy of his garments.

"From the Town-Council," replied Ango, taking a seat beside her; a stool of simple deal, differing strangely from the rich cushions of Genoa velvet, forming his habitual resting-place.

"And how long hath it been the custom for the Town-Council of this poor port of Dieppe to deliberate in robes and trappings of velvet and jewels, touching the price of cod-fish or the duty upon herrings?"—demanded Sister Genevieve, unable to repress some degree of vexation at the unseemly pomps and vanities displayed by her brother.

"We met upon no such skipperlike matters," cried Ango, too much engrossed in his self-satisfaction to take note of her unwonted bitterness; "but for a discussion that ought to have penetrated with joy the dull cold walls of the very prison thou hast chosen for thyself. The King, dear sister, the King is about to visit Dieppe!"

"Heaven send him a happy journey!" replied Genevieve, devoutly crossing herself; "and incline his royal heart, when here, to lend that aid to the charitable and religious institutions of the city, of which they stand so greatly in need."

Ango's brow darkened. It was his pleasure to be thought a munificent patron of the institutions of Dieppe; and, till engrossed by the progress of his manor and the vastness of his speculations, had, in truth, been held so by the world.

"If the convent of the sisters of St. Mary stand in need of benefactions," said he, haughtily, "there are those among the burghers of the city both able and willing to relieve its necessities, without need of troubling our lord the King with its petty necessities. Nevertheless, it strikes me that, for a

provincial convent, having moreover, but a single ward for the relief of the sick, and a single day of the week set apart for doles to the poor, the dowry brought to its treasury by the sister of Ango, might have preserved it from immediate want!"

"I speak not of this poor house," replied Genevieve, mildly; "seeing that thanks to thy generosity, it is endowed with ampler income and higher immunities than any other in Dieppe. Nay, with my brother's leave, I will speak of none other, since the subject is distasteful. Say,—when comes King Francis to our walls; and with what honors will the town welcome so illustrious a guest?"—

"With none. The town will do nothing!" replied Ango, significantly.

"How?" cried Genevieve, reddening under her whimple and veil, for shame to think that her native place should be dishonored in the eyes of the King.

"An individual hath already taken upon himself the duty of welcoming his Sovereign," resumed Ango.

"*Thyself!*" replied the nun, exultingly, but with an anxious expression of countenance. "Yet bethink thee, Ango, what envyings and heart-burnings thy pretensions to so great a distinction will bring upon thee!"

"I think of nought but the glory of standing host to the King of France!" cried Ango, with increasing exultation. "I think of nought but to have it said, from frontier to frontier, Francis I was prisoner to the Emperor, friend to Harry of England, scholar to Bayard, and guest to Ango,—Ango the Norman mariner,—Ango the privateer!"

The name of her father and brother thus proudly proclaimed, excited a transient feeling of triumph in the soul of the nun. The next moment, she reproached herself with her fault; admitting that, even were Ango's ambition excusable, HER vocation forbad all particitation in his pride. But while Genevieve was rebuking herself by inward recitation of a penitential psalm, Ango proceeded to unfold that his house and household were to be placed forthwith at the disposal of his Majesty; how a guard of honor, formed of the crews of his vessels then in port, completely armed with brave accoutrements, was to await the King's coming a league from the town, and attend upon his majesty during his sojourn.

"My patron, Cardinal d'Amboise, is to be in attendance upon the King," said he, "as well as the chief barons and seigneurs of the province, betwixt this and Rouen. All these will have bed and board under my roof, such as they have rarely seen, save under that of the Louvre. On the first day of their coming, they will be entertained with a gorgeous banquet, and a choice concert of music. On the second, my royal guest purposeth to inspect the harbor; and a joust upon the water, performed by my own people, will diversify the scene. On the third, being the Sabbath, high mass must be performed in the church of St Jacques, by my lord the Cardinal Archbishop, assisted by the clergy of his pontificate; and on the fourth, a review of the forces will take place in the valley of Arques, crowned by a festival of fireworks, and other ingenious devices of masquing and music, in which the King is said to take especial delight."

"And the cost of these regal entertainments is to be defrayed by thy single self?" demanded Genevieve.

"How better mark my sense of gratitude to God for the greatness of his bounties, than by testifying my reverence towards the anointed of his creatures?" replied Ango, proudly.

"By bestowing the same vast gratuity upon his creatures less prosperous," argued the nun, devoutly crossing herself. "The vast outlay thou dost contemplate, would endow an hospital—a monastery; nay, raise from its foundation-stone, a cathedral great as the Rouennais church of St. Ouen, in honor of thy blessed patron, St. John."

"Thou knowest that I have already issued instructions for a rich chapel to his honor in my parochial church of St. Jacques du Haut Pas, besides ten thousand marks contributed to that of St. Remy," said Ango, drily. "With respect to monasteries and hospitals, it strikes me that the sick and the men of religion, are already as well cared for in Dieppe as the condition of our city requireth."

"A proof, were proof wanting," replied Genevieve, sternly, "that it is thine own glory, and not the glory of God, thou are seeking to advance, in thine intended homage to the King of France."

"By propitiating his Majesty with a noble welcome,"

observed Ango, evading the question, "I may haply secure for the port and harbor of Dieppe those royal favors which have raised Havre du Grace, Nantes, and La Rochelle, to their present high prosperity."

"Say, rather, that thou mayst peradventure secure to thyself tokens of royal favor in thy personal ennoblement," said the nun; for after such things, O my brother! doth thine heart aspire far more than after the self-contentment of virtue."

"I know not why the love of virtue should inspire contempt for the high condition and estate in which virtue is most memorably practised," retorted Ango. "I do not deny that I would fain elevate my son to the rank in life of his maternal ancestors. The stateliest tree hath its root; and proud were I to plant an acorn from which the sapling may send forth branches to flourish in after ages, and overshadow the earth. But enough of my projects. When from the belfry of their temple the holy sisters of St. Mary look down upon the pageants with which, by sea and land, Ango rejoiceth to recreate the eyes of his Sovereign, be it the holy task, beloved Genevieve, to breathe an orison for thy brother, that his soul be not unworthily elated by the honors of the day."

Sister Genevieve waited not the coming of the King to fulfil the behest of her brother. Daily, hourly, did she weary Heaven with intercessions in behalf of Ango; as a man who, placing his delight and glory in the things of the world, was more especially at the mercy of the sports and gusts of fortune.

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## PART III.

THE dwelling-house of Ango,* on the port of Dieppe (not far from that ancient tower whose venerable walls, still

* In 1647, Cardinal Barderini, on visiting the House of Ango with the Peres de l'Oratoire, observed—"*Nunquam vidi domum ligneam pulchrioram.*"

standing, attest the valor of the English assailants, under their captain, the renowned John Talbot,) albeit fashioned, according to the fashion of the time and country, of wood alone, was of surpassing magnificence. The facades towards both the sea and the gardens, and the courts of the double quadrangle, were exclusively of oak, carved with the utmost skill in devices, representing the fables of Æsop, and striking episodes in the history of Normandy. Around the state floor, ran an overhanging balcony, commanding, on one side, extensive views of the ocean on the other, of the rich valley of Arques; and into the terrace, or balcony, opened the wide windows of a fine saloon and noble gallery, hung with stained leather, with ceilings and wainscoting carved and gilt, and enchased pictures of the Italian masters. In these magnificent apartments, of which the floors were inlaid with rare Indian wood susceptible of the highest polish, were displayed musical instruments of the most exquisite workmanship, chalices and goblets of agate and crystal, and ebony cabinets containing cameos and medals of immense value.

On dismounting at the gate of a rich burgher of Dieppe, on whom he was to confer the honor of becoming his guest. Francis I received with grateful courtesy, the obsequious homage of Ango; but when, having traversed the hall, and ascended the carved staircase on footcloths of scarlet velvet of Genoa, his Majesty reached the gallery, where he beheld, for the first time, the productions of Leonardo da Vinci, he was silent with surprise. A sentiment almost resembling pique against so luxurious a subject, seemed to render him insensible to the laborious efforts of his host. Nevertheless, on entering the saloon, where the Lady Bianca rose from the chair of state at his approach, and with an air of mingled dignity and humbleness, sank upon her knee to mark the cession of her place to her royal visitor, gallantry suspended every other feeling; and, hastening towards her to raise her from the ground, he imprinted, in the movement, a respectful kiss upon her pale and lofty forehead, and signified to Ango that of all the jewels and chef-d'œuvres contained in his house, the fairest was before him. By his royal will, the wife of Ango took her seat at his right hand during the

banquet that was now magnificently served up before the King.

"The name of Pavia hath ill-inclined me towards all that reminds me of Italy," said Francis, at the close of a feast graced with the rarest viands and most delicate wines (addressing himself to Cardinal d'Amboise, who was honored with a place at his royal table;) "nevertheless, this day, my mind seems fated to receive its most pleasurable impressions from objects imported into my kingdom from my royal mother's native country. First, a lady hostess, whose graces of person and deportment would shed lustre upon the Louvre; secondly, pictures of such moving excellence that I could loiter away weeks in contemplation before them; and, lastly, these goblets and salvers, whose chasing as far exceeds the art evinced by my clumsy goldsmiths of Paris, as the rich pastures of the valley of Arques, yonder, exceed the sandy plain of Grenelle. Cellini, didst thou call him?" pursued the King, addressing himself to the delighted Ango.

"Benvenuto Cellini, Sire," replied the burgher, who was in humble attendance behind the royal chair.

"I pray you, Master Ango, have the fellow written to," resumed the King; "I must have him forthwith complete a cupboard of plate for the private apartments of my palace of Fontainbleau. Let him hasten to France. I will no longer allow so choice an artist to remain obscure."

"I crave your Majesty's pardon, in presuming to assert that the name of Benvenuto Cellini is already illustrious," replied Ango, bending one knee as he tendered anew to the King, a richly embossed goblet of ivory and gold, containing rare wine of Cyprus. "The cunning goldsmith is of the household of the Duke of Tuscany; and may not, for his life, quit Italy. It was only by vast bribery and continual entreaty, that I procured from Master Benvenuto his acceptation of my commission for the execution, at by-hours and by stealth, of the buffet of which your Majesty deigns to express such high commendation."

A smile stole upon the handsome lip of Francis, at the idea that a subject of his kingdom, a burgher of his poor town of Dieppe, should affect to treat, as unattainable to his Sovereign, the object he had overmastered! He prom-

ised himself in silence to treat with Master Cellini, forthwith, through the intervention of one of his diplomatic agents of Italy, rather than through that of the overweening captain of privateers; little witting that the eccentric sculptor, the spoiled child of pontiffs and sovereigns, was still more difficult to deal with than the bold and ambitious Ango.

On the day following his arrival, Francis was roused, soon after sunrise, by strains of exquisite music, from ministrels posted in the gardens beneath the royal lodging; for Ango, desirous that his illustrious guest should behold, under its fairest aspect, the harbor of the town that courted his favor, would not (even to prolong the slumber of Francis, in the right regal couch prepared for his repose) forfeit the occasion of the morning-tide, which was now rippling at high mark in summer waves of glassy green, against the granite coping of the quays.

"The weather keeps faith with us, my courteous host," cried his Majesty, when, on the completion of the royal toilet, Ango kneeled humbly at his feet to offer the morning draught of the King; together with a manchet of fair white bread, served in a goblet and salver of gold, more richly sculptured than those which had attracted his admiration the preceeding day. "A fairer day could not have prospered my design of familiarizing myself with a new element. Let us take water, I beseech you, while the tide holds to favor our marine adventures."

Had Ango found space to glance round the circle of courtiers, who had accompanied the King upon his expedition to review the newly-raised legions of Normandy, he would have admired to see many a warlike cheek was pale at the mere idea of embarkation; so little are the French habituated to the maritime pursuits to which the English are from childhood accustomed. But the Dieppois was too deeply absorbed in the honor of stepping at the Kings right hand through his own gorgeous apartments, and down his emblazoned staircase of state, to have heed of the weaknesses of his companions.

The first circumstance that diverted his attention, was a sudden exclamation of delight from the lips of the King, on emerging from the threshhold; facing which, towards the harbor, a triumphal arch of great beauty and magnificence

(previously prepared) had been erected in the course of the night, adorned with pictures and bas-reliefs, commemorating the chivalrous triumphs of the royal visitor!

"*Mort de Dieu,* Sir Ango!" cried Francis, his cheek flushing with pride and pleasure, "this is truly a princely token of homage! Many of royal blood might take lesson of my trusty merchant of Dieppe in the noble art of hospitality!"

Ango, who, cap in hand, was escorting the royal *cortege* to the shore, had soon the further gratification of beholding his Sovereign's eye rest with wonder and admiration upon a flotilla of six elegant galleys, nobly adorned and sculptured for the occasion, bearing the banner of France, and on the prow the initials of John Ango; built at his sole cost, in his private dockyard, for the purpose of doing honor to the visit of his Sovereign. As the little fleet with its illustrious freight, issued from the harbor and put out to sea, the armed vessels of Ango, lying at anchor to the number of sixteen, sent forth a thundering salute to their Lord and King, answered by shouts and acclamations from thousands lining the shore towards the Point d'Ailly; the whole population of the district having poured forth to gaze upon their Prince. Cries of "Long live the King!" "*Vive Francois I!*" "*Vive Ango!*" resounded along the cliffs of Normandy.

From the humble belfry of the sisters of St. Mary, another prayer ascended at that moment of triumph, to the Tribunal of Grace. Sister Genevieve, leaning against the parapet, which commanded a view of the ocean and the gallant convoy whose gay pennons streamed in the breeze, was unable to repress an exclamation of "*Vive Ango!*"—adding, in a lower voice, "and grant him strength, O Lord! to bear with humility, this fearful load of greatness."

Ango's honours, however, ripe as they seemed, were even that very day destined to unhoped for augmentation. The Lady Bianca, as from the balcony of her golden gallery she watched the manœuvring of the galleys, and after several hours' excursion along the coast their return to the harbour, was startled by the hurried gallop of a horseman, who, on arriving at her gate, she recognised by the golden greyhound in his cap, as a pursuivant, or royal courier, bringing despatches from the capital. Such a messenger had already

made his appearance in Dieppe, to notify to Ango, the arrival of the King. What was this new courier to announce to Francis?—

As the galleys entered the harbour, piloted by the *Royal Francis* (the vessel fitted up exclusively for the King), the wife of Ango observed that the pursuivant, though way-worn and travel-stained, persisted in approaching within the lines formed by the burgher-guard of Dieppe on either side the arch of Triumph; as if intent upon obtaining access to Francis the moment of his arrival, and previous to his re-entering the house of Ango. An inexplicable emotion took possession of her bosom. She could not but fancy that the arrival of the confidential courier, on whom her husband had bestowed a princely gratuity for the good tidings of which he was formerly the bearer, imported further good to Ango.

Again did the acclamations of the gay multitude assembled along the quay and lining the windows and balconies of every house within view, rend the summer air with their joyous echos; so that the music of the minstrels, greeting the return of the King, could scarcely be heard for the cries and vivats of the throng. Still, Bianca's eyes remained intently fixed upon the royal galley. She saw that Francis (while, removing his plumed cap from his noble brow, he bowed low and gracefully, in acknowledgment of the salutations of the fair Dieppoises) had caught sight of his messenger; and that the moment the King set foot on the quay, his first movement was to extend his hand to receive the despatches of which he seemed to know his pursuivant to be the bearer. At such a distance, it was impossible for the anxious lady to read the expression of the King's countenance as he perused the documents placed before him; but while, in trembling silence, she stood viewing the scene, she saw the King (having completed the perusal of the scroll) beckon towards him the son of his host; and was lost in amazement to behold young Theodore, after kneeling a moment at the feet of his Sovereign, repeat, in presence of the thousands assembled, the same ceremony towards his father. Again, shouts arose from the people, of which Bianca was unable to interpret the meaning. Her eyes were dim with tears as she gazed upon the graceful figure of her son, who rose from his knee and stood beside his father,

face to face with the sovereign prince on whose brilliant accoutrements the evening sun was shedding its refulgent brightness. She beheld only those three—the King—Theodore—Ango;—her sovereign, her son, her husband!

Soon, however, officious friends thronged in to prepare her for the intelligence she was about to receive from the lips of Francis. The scroll of parchment she had seen delivered by his Majesty to the hands of his munificent host, contained letters-patent of nobility, constituting the burgher Ango and his heirs forever, Viscounts of the kingdom of France!

But even this was not all. The recent death of the Sieur de Manroy having left vacant the government of Dieppe, in the hearing of the whole population, Francis I. called upon the municipality of the town to do homage to his representative, Viscount Ango, as Captain Commandment of the Castle and Garrison of Dieppe!

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## PART IV.

The lowliness of gratitude with which these royal favours were acknowledged, served to cement the good-will subsisting between the Sovereign and his subject. Scarcely had winter re-assembled the courtiers of Paris under the groined roofs of the Louvre, when the Viscount and his lovely lady were among the favoured guests of the King;—and Bianca, of whom such scenes were the natural atmosphere, had the gratification of displaying the rich jewels and Oriental stuffs, lavished upon her by her husband, in rivalship with the splendours of the royal favourite, Diane de Poitiers, at that moment in the zenith of her charms.

It was whispered, however, among the courtiers, that it was neither to execute the registries of his patent of nobility, nor even to figure in the pageants of the court, that Ango visited the capital. The rich burgher had long acted as auditor to the Cardinal Archbishop of Rouen, and by prudent management, doubled the revenues of his see; and it

was now surmised that Francis himself, whose wars had exhausted his treasury in the earlier portion of his reign, was fain to mortgage to the Governor of Dieppe, in exchange for a loan of considerable amount, his crown lands in Normandy and the adjacent province.

Certain it was, that though Ango was known to have claimed a military escort for the transport of a considerable treasure to the capital, the troop was at once dismissed in Paris: the Lady Bianca's litter being escorted, on their return to Dieppe, by his own people only. Yet so far from his revenues being diminished by this transfer of property, never had Ango's speculations been bolder, or his habits more magnificent, than during the ensuing year. Under his government, the castle and fortifications underwent complete reparation; the harbor and jetty were improved; and the city gates restored and crowned with towers. The beautifully sculptured treasury and winding staircase, still extant, in the Church of St. Jacques du Haut Pas, were a tribute from the munificence of Ango; and the Chapel of St. John, in that of St. Remy, was dedicated to his patron saint, by the new Viscount. On every side, were to be seen proofs of his liberal zeal for the benefit of his native city. It sufficed for Ango to address a petition to the King, for his desires and those of his fellow-townsmen to be granted; the importance of such a subject being thoroughly appreciated by Francis, who had been right glad to seek assistance from Ango, in arming the Channel fleet equipped at Havre, Honfleur, and Dieppe, to prevent the English from fortifying the town of Boulogne. For the Governor of Dieppe was no longer the petty trader, the owner of a poor squadron of merchant vessels, but the haughty master of twenty sloops of war! More than once, the crews of his merchantmen, trading with the Moluccas and the coast of Malabar, had come to serious disputes with the Spanish, Flemish, and above all, the Portuguese settlers, jealous of his pretensions; and in several severe engagements with foreign frigates, the star of Ango had prevailed, and his people come off victorious.

On one disastrous occasion, however, a vessel belonging to one of his fleets, having been separated, by stress of weather, from her convoy, fell into the hands of the Portu-

guese, already incensed against the noble mariner of Dieppe by former successes; when the crew was inhumanly massacred, and the vessel, with its rich cargo, steered in triumph into the Tagus.

Furious at his loss, and still more irritated by the insult which he had the arrogance to conceive was offered to his flag, Ango swore to be revenged; and, having issued orders for the arming of his ten finest vessels, with eight others of inferior size, and, in addition to their crews, about a thousand men, mercenaries attached to his service, he prepared to make a descent upon the coast of Portugal, and retaliate the injury he had sustained.

The expedition sailed; and the first intelligence of its safe arrival in the Tagus brought also to the delighted Ango news of perfect success. Several villages on the banks of the Tagus had been ravaged and destroyed by his men; and the conflagration of one of these, within a league of Lisbon, struck terror into the inhabitants, unable to comprehend such an attack on the part of Frenchmen, the allies of their King.

A still greater panic, however, was excited, when several valuable Indiamen, falling in with Ango's vessels, which were cruising at the mouth of the harbour, were instantly captured. Unable to believe such an exploit the work of privateers, the Portuguese government, regarding it as a declaration of hostilities on the part of Francis I, despatched a deputation to the palace of Chambord, where the King was residing, to demand the cause of so gross a violation of international law.

For some time, the King of France attached little faith to the representations of these delegates. Satisfied that no hostile instructions had been issued by his Admiralty, and that, without such orders, the boldest captain of his fleet would not, on any provocation, proceed to acts of violence, he attempted to persuade the Count d'Olivares, and the noble gentlemen by whom he was accompanied, that the whole statement originated in misconception. On learning, however, from the Ambassador-Extraordinary, that the flag under which these outrages were committed, bore for ensign and device, a sphere, or terrestrial globe, surmounted by a crucifix, with the legend—"*Spes mea Deus, a juventute*

*mea*," Francis recognised at once the blazon of the Governor of Dieppe.

"'Tis Ango who hath taken this quarrel on his hand!" cried the King, turning towards his astonished courtiers. "'Tis Ango who hath declared war against the King of Portugal!"—

Count d'Olivares, with an obsequious obeisance, ventured to demand of his Majesty in what quarter of the world the dominions of the said King Ango might be situated; and, had not a violent burst of laughter from the King testified to the assembled courtiers, that his Majesty was disposed to make the arrogance of the Dieppois captain a matter of merriment, they were prepared to treat the presumption of their countryman as a treasonous offence against the crown.

"Be pleased to inform my good brother of Portugal," said the King, perceiving the ambassadors to be both astonished and mortified by his mirth, "that I trust nothing will in future occur to disturb the pacific relations now happily established between Portugal and France. Assure him that it is not *I* who have insulted his flag and ravaged his territories, but a captain of one of my ports; a man who, being rich and independent as a prince, seems disposed to usurp royal authority. Or rather, if my advice have any weight, ere ye return to Lisbon, proceed at once to Dieppe, whereof this bold man is commandant, and make such terms with him as ye may. Trust me, gentlemen, Ango is not a man to be trifled with!"

On this hint, Count d'Olivares and his suit withdrew from Chambord; while Ango, premonished of their arrival and errand by a private message from the King, prepared in haste to receive them with regal magnificence, at Varengeville; and the Portugues nobles are said to have asserted, on their return to Lisbon, that the mode of Francis's Court at Chambord was rude and insignificant, compared with that of Ango the Dieppois, in his manor; more especially when, after having entertained them right royally, he acceded to their entreaty that his fleet should be instantly recalled, conditioning only that, for the future, the captains of the King of Portugal would evince more respect towards the flag of France.

But though the Portuguese trembling for their possessions

on the coast, and Francis, laboring under heavy obligations towards his overweeningsubject, saw fit to submit to his insolent aggressions, the fellow-townsmen of Ango, the companions of his youth, the witnesses of his growing prosperity, began to lose all patience with his assumptions. The Commandant of Dieppe had now taken to himself a guard of honor, by which he was surrounded whenever he went abroad, so as to be inaccessible to the burghers and captains, his kindred and friends; and established himself as governor in the castle. His beautiful dwelling on the harbor was shut up and abandoned; while, from the towers of the lofty fortress, he exercised an almost regal authority over the town. Ango's indignant fellow-burghers had scarcely patience to be treated as subjects, by one whom they had never ceased to regard in the light of a prosperous equal.

On one occasion, the town-council having presumed to resist a command issued by the Viscount for the indisposition of a new rate of harbor duty, Ango appeared in person (for the first time since his accession of rank) among the notables; and, upon their venturing to persist in their resistance, he, who had made war with impunity upon kings, proceeded so far as to inflict a blow upon Jacques Morel, one of the most active of his opponents. Ere his cholar had subsided, a missive was brought to the fortress, addressed to the Governor, by the simple name of "John Ango," requiring him to visit his sister, who was lying sick and infirm in the convent of St. Mary.

"What hast thou done?"—demanded the feeble voice of the nun, when Ango, obeying the summons, took his seat beside her humble pallet. "Hast thou not enemies enough already, that thou must fain spit upon the beard of the son of our father's friend?—Jacques Morel hath vowed that thou shalt atone in dust and ashes the wrong thou hast this day dealt him in the fulness of thy pride!"—

"I have chastised the insolence of greater men than an admiral of fishing-smacks," said Ango, disdainfully.

"The fishing-smacks of Jacques Morel have searched the depths of the Gulf of Ormus, and bandied buffets with the Atlantic waves," replied Sister Genevieve. "Such as he is to-day, such yesterday was our father. He was our play-

mate too, Ango, and more than our playmate; for well knowest thou, that but for thy sister's weakness, he had been at this hour thy brother."

"It was thyself who chose to break the bond of betrothment," replied her brother; "but trust me, hadst thou not retreated from the contract, never would I have bestowed my sister's hand, at the altar, on a petty trader of Dieppe!"

"Thou mightest, at least, abstain from loading him with insult," persisted Sister Genevieve; "less for *his* sake than thine own; for, thick as are these convent walls, a whisper hath already reached mine ear that Jacques Morel vows deadly vengeance against thee and thine."

"His vengeance be on my head, then," quoth Ango, with a contemptuous smile. "The good castle of Dieppe containeth dungeons for the correction of evil minds; and ere the soldiers of my garrison would permit this Dieppois chapman to smite a blow against their Governor——"

"Thy thoughts are too much bent upon deeds of violence," remonstrated the nun. "Mischief shall hunt the violent man; and he who smiteth with the sword shall perish by the sword. But there are other blows, my good brother, which may attain even the Commandant of Dieppe. Before the tribunals of the law, all men are equal; and, lo! it is in a court of justice that thou, even thou, the Governor, shall be called upon to render thine account!"

"The Chancellor is my good and noble friend," observed Ango, sternly; "the fiscals are my creatures; the President of the Tribunal of Commerce holds his appointment from my recommendation. I have no fear but that my case whatever it be, will meet with gentle dealing."

"If thy cause be a strong one, thou art wise to invoke justice," said Sister Genevieve, almost re-assured by his coldness. "Nevertheless, should the Sire Morel's accusation prove a just one, *viz.*, that being, in the year of Grace 1524, thy partner in divers expeditions and undertakings, thou hast frustrated him of his lawful share of certain prizes and captures effected by vessels armed under your joint authority and at your united cost——"

"'Tis false as hell!" cried Ango, furiously.

"Heaven send that the Admirality of Paris (before

whom he is about to sue out his process) be of the same opinion!" replied his sister, unmoved by his violence.

"The Admiralty of *Paris?*" cried Ango, in a tone of consternation.

"Of Paris!—For how, at Dieppe, could Morel have obtained justice against the Commandant? The fiscals are, as thou didst now assert, thy creatures, and——"

"How knowest thou of Jacques Morel's intention?" cried Ango, impatiently. "Despite the seeming seclusion of this holy house, have the sisters of St. Mary liberty to play the gossip with members of the town-council, more especially with such as have been of old their suitors and servants?"—

"Thou hast forgotten, then, amid the pomps of thy new seigneury," observed his sister, "that our holy mother, the Superior, is sister of Jacques Morel, as I of his adversary? Even the interests of her flock have not rendered the good abbess insensible to the wrongs of her brother's house; and lo! on learning the grievous news that he had been smitten on the cheek in full council, by Ango the Governor, the venerable woman entreated the prayers of the community that God might incline the heart of Jacques Morel to mercy, lest he should deal ruin and disgrace on one who had been in his time a liberal benefactor to the convent."

"My humble thanks to the pious lady mother," cried Ango bitterly. "But bid her reserve her prayers for the plight of her brother, who may find my armed hand upon his neck sooner than he conjectures!"

"Say not not so, O my brother!"—was the earnest reply of sister Genevieve. "The King, thy master, by whom thine acts, whether for good or evil, have been hitherto upheld, lieth on his death-bed. Nor Francis, nor the poor nun thy sister, shall ever again stand in the flesh before the face of God. Take it, therefore, on the word of a dying woman, that, when the breath of the King goeth forth, thy prosperity will also wax to an end. The tribunals of the kingdom will exult in dealing harshly with one who hath so long defied their authority; and, when Francis is in his grave, the upstart Viscount will find bitter enemies among the nobles of France, and the mariner, John Ango, bitter accusers among the burghers, his sometime equals."

"Enough, enough!" cried the Governor, rising hastily from his stool. "Suffice it that thou hast already bred disquiet in my household, by inciting my only son to rebellion. But for the abetting of thine evil counsel, Theodore Ango had been even now the husband of the high and puissant Demoiselle d'Amboise, kinswoman of my Lord the Cardinal, by whose interest I were enabled to laugh to scorn the tribunals of the Admiralty. Whereas, behold, the youth is a wanderer in foreign lands; and there shall abide till I have in writing his promise to resign his idle passion for a girl of the people, the plebeian niece of Jacques Morel."

"That writing thou wilt never have" answered the nun with firmness. "I know my nephew's heart; and sooner than break the solemn covenant of troth-plight into which he hath entered with Isabeau Morel, Theodore will live and die an exile. Mine eyes shall behold him no more, my lips counsel him no furthur; but I die in the solemn persuasion that my father's grandson and representative on earth, would renounce all chance of worldly happiness rather than be forsworn."

A few more weeks, and the passing bell of the convent of St. Mary announced that Sister Genevieve had entered into her rest. Yet, already her predictions had been partly accomplished. The Commandant of Dieppe was unable even to cast his love-offering upon the grave of the poor nun, having been summoned to appear before the tribunals of his native country for malpractices and felonious dealing! The town and garrison were now agitated by the most violent commotions. Ango had been removed to Paris under an armed escort, that seemed to announce the harshest intentions towards the accused; and, notwithstanding the favor which his bitter opposition to the Protestant cause in Normandy might have been expected to secure from the bigoted counsellors of the young King who had succeeded to the throne of Francis I, it was rumored that the cause of Ango was prejudged. In spite of the eloquence of the men of the law engaged in his behalf, the accused was accordingly condemned, by a unanimity of voices, to pay, not only to Jacques Morel the amount of his demand, but a fine of ten thousand marks to the King for breach of commercial law; and, in default of payment, to be incarcerated in the royal prison of the Petit Chatelet.

These exactions, however, heavy as they were, constituted the least painful part of Ango's punishment. Previous to the promulgation of his sentence, a successor had been appointed to his government of the castle of Dieppe: and the new Commandant, a kinsman and partisan of the family of Morel, having ejected the household goods and chattels of his predecessor, the rich hangings and sculptured cupboards of Ango had been seized upon by the populace, and converted into a bonfire; the flames of which, rising from the high cliffs beyond the citadel, were apparent as far as the manor of Varengeville, and many leagues out at sea.

Released from prison, after payment of the exorbitant charges of his process at law, Ango, broken in health and impaired in fortune by his recent calamities, would gladly have refrained from returning to the scene of his humiliation. He saw that the loss of the King, his master, was the signal of his ruin. He began to place implicit faith in the predictions of the sister now lost to him for ever; and shorn of his beams, reduced to the insignificance of a private station, could scarcely support the idea of confronting the scornful looks of his fellow-citizens. Still, the sanguine nature of his spirit forbad him to despair. To return to his native place was inevitable; since, in speculations connected with the harbor, and in land adjoining the town, were invested the remains of a fortune shattered by ostentation, and reduced by the award of justice; nor could he refrain from flattering himself that, even yet, judicious ventures might repair the injuries he had sustained. The star which had so long prospered his undertakings could not have set forever!—

On arriving in Normandy, however, the mortified man had not courage to re-appear in his place in the town-council of Dieppe. Secluded in his manor-house, it was thence he issued instructions to his captains and dock-masters; and, profiting by his absence, new accusations were soon brought forward against him in the Assembly of Notables. Encouraged by the success of Jacques Morel, many who had hitherto lacked courage to denounce the malefactions of the royal favorite, loudly accused him of peculation in his office, as comptroller of the salt and grain duties of the harbor.

The accounts of the last twenty years were called for

and re-examined, when peculations of so gross a nature became apparent, that it was clear the whole remaining fortune of Ango would be insufficient to replace the deficit. His houses, his lands, his noble pictures, his rich plate, became the spoil of his enemies; being forfeited to the crown by a decree of the fiscal court, and hastily and cruelly bought up by the readiest bidders.

Confined in the miserable prison adjoining the fortress of the Pollet, to which, in the plentitude of his power he had consigned so many a fellow-citizen, Ango waited in anguish of spirit to learn that the last penny of his property had been divided, and the period of his punishment expired. To die, would have been a blessed escape from the bitterness of his fate; but, fallen as he was, he felt it his duty as a man to meet the fulness of his destinies. For, lo! Bianca yet lived and looked to him for support. Sick and infirm, unable to share his captivity or even to visit him in prison, supported by the charity of a former tenant of one of his numerous farms, the Lady Bianca despatched daily messages to the Pollet, bidding the captive rise superior to misfortune, and reminding him that the proofs of tenderness he had once lavished on his wife, were poor in account compared with the sacrifice of living for her sake, amid the cares and privations of poverty. And thus, the fond affections the origin of his ambition, now served as a talisman to preserve him from despair.

Amid the general wreck of his property, the manor of Varengeville had been purchased, at an inconsiderable price by the rich burgher Jacques Morel; and his enemy now ruled in his place! Nevertheless, the chastening hand of God had so subdued the haughtiness of Ango, that he resolved, on his deliverance from prison, to take his staff in his hand and seek the humble farm in which his afflicted partner abided; albeit from its poor casement the stately bowers of Varengeville were painfully visible.

Had the sentence of Ango included only the forfeiture of his fortune, the purpose of Providence had been unfulfilled, and the proud man perished in his impenitence. But solitude had effected wonders—had bowed that stubborn heart and broken that ambitious spirit—till, through the fractures, religion poured her healing balm, and enabled him to work

out his salvation. While communing with himself in the silence of his imprisonment, Ango learned to revile his former hardness of heart, his unparental severity towards the son whose presence would have been a sustainment in his sorrow, his unbrotherly rejection of the counsels of his sainted sister. That he had not altogether neglected, in his day of prosperity, the cause of the poor and needy, was owing to the gentle instigations of Genevieve; and now, all the alleviation of his wretchedness consisted in the remembrance of his faithful service to the church, by sending messengers of peace to the savage countries with whose unenlightened children his vessels held traffic, and by endowing, to perpetuity, religious and charitable foundations for the benefit of his native town.

The happy influence of his sister, still served to soften and encourage his afflicted soul. In his dreams, he oftentimes beheld her, crowned with the palms of beatitude, and surrounded with the spirits of just men made perfect, bidding him submit humbly to the rod of affliction, and trust in the mercy of his chastiser. "Thou hast a loving and duteous son who will still yield comfort to thine old age," seemed evermore to issue from the lips of the spirit in bliss; and Ango, who for months past had not dared to turn his thoughts towards the banished Theodore, upon whom, at parting, he had pronounced a fearful malediction, began to call to mind the sweetness of filial love, and to believe that Heaven, in its mercy, might yet restore the lost one to his arms!

"From those for whose advancement I laboured, I met with nought but ingratitude!" faltered Ango, on waking, to find his pallet of rushes wet with tears; "but, lo! my heart whispers that the youth with whom I have dealt so harshly, will render me a blessing for every curse!"

It was at noonday that the period of Ango's imprisonment expired; but so great was the interest excited in his favour by the patience with which he had supported his humiliation, that he found no difficulty in obtaining leave to shelter himself, till nightfall, within the prison walls, so as to escape the insults of the populace. He had signified to his wife, to have a horse and guide in attendance before the church of St. Marie des Greves at sunset; and from thence, after per-

forming his devotions at the shrine of Notre Dame de bon Secours, which, in happier times, he had erected in gratitude for the deliverance of one of his argosies from shipwreck, he took his silent way, in company with the peasant despatched by the Lady Bianca, to bring him to her presence.

It was a chilly autumn evening. Shrill gusts arose at intervals from the sea, and drove athwart the heights crowned by the lonely chapel of Caudecote. The fields were at rest, save when a solitary bittern rose from the marshy meadows of the valley of Arques. The boor by whom the unhappy man was conducted, plodded onwards in sullen taciturnity; and Ango, dispirited by the anticipation of beholding upon the countenance of his beloved wife, the ravages effected by misery and privation, could scarcely support the sadness of his soul. So often as he had traversed that road in all the elation of triumph!—So often as he had escorted from the Castle of Dieppe to Varengeville the litter containing his lovely lady, preceded by a guard of honour, and accompanied by the promising youth, his son! And now a sullen peasant was all his escort; his hapless wife was pining even unto death, the pensioner of the poor; while as to Theodore, even his parents knew not whether he still survived, or to what savage shore and cruel straits he might have been driven by the persecutions of his father.

The night drew on to utter darkness; and Ango's eyes, blinded with tears, marked not what road they were taking. His soul was back in the mystery of years,—his heart was heavy with self-reviling; and it startled him from a reverie as of deep sleep, when the guide, suddenly checking his horse, bad him alight, for that his journey was accomplished.

"How is this?"—cried Ango, on discerning that, instead of the rude gates of a farm house, the man held open the postern of a long stone wall. Suspecting an ambush, he began to repent having ventured forth unarmed with a stranger; when, lo! the lights from within the edifice that confronted him, on closing the postern, seemed to revive half obliterated recollections; and a death-like sickness came over him when he found that he was standing on the well-known lawn of Varengeville. He had been betrayed, then, into the presence of his enemy!—

Already faint with exhaustion, and the excitement of the

preceding hours, Ango fell lifeless to the ground. On his restoration to consciousness, centuries seemed to have passed over his head. He was no longer the same Ango, the same humiliated outcast. He was at Varengeville. He was reclining on a bed in his own favourite chamber; and beside him, with her hand fast locked in his, stood Bianca, his own beloved Bianca, pale indeed (and with her paleness rendered still more dazzling by the mourning weeds in which she was attired), but gentle and affectionate; *more* affectionate, *far* more gentle than in their days of prosperity.

In a moment, her thin wasted hand was pressed to his lips, while his finger, pointing to the sable dress she wore, seemed to indicate the question he had not strength to utter —"Hath the worst befallen us?—Are we childless?"—

Bianca was spared the necessity of reply. Ango perceived that they were not alone; and the deep sobs of the person who was kneeling at the extremity of the couch, indicated that it was one who took part in all their joys and sorrows!—

"Where am I, and who is this compassionate stranger?" faltered Ango, drawing his wife gently towards him.

"You are in your own house, and in presence of your exemplary son," replied Bianca, placing her hand upon the head of the youth, whom, with a burst of relieving tears, Ango strained in ecstasy to his bosom.

"Varengeville is yours again, my beloved father," exclaimed Theodore, when the first burst of emotion between them had subsided. "The tidings of your disasters reached me not till a year after the transmission of the sad intelligence by the father of my affianced wife. Deeply grieved that the accusation brought against you in a moment of exasperation should have proved the origin of such extensive and unforeseen misfortunes, our friend armed and despatched a vessel to Goa, whence I had already sent tidings to his daughter of my safety and faithful affection; and six months ago, I sailed from India on my return, to tender my parents the first fruits of my industry and enterprise. To me, hath our repentant enemy surrendered this house and its dependencies; and henceforth, as heretofore, you are master at Varengeville. I shall but crave harbourage under your roof for myself and one gentle being, from whom I beseech

you, my father, no longer to withhold the benediction, without which our union were accursed in the eye of Heaven!"

To resist the entreaty of the son thus happily restored to him, was impossible. It was not without a struggle that Ango consented to clasp hands in amity with the man who, provoked by repeated insults and aggressions, had undesignedly wrought the double work of vengeance; nevertheless, when he saw with what sincerity of sympathy Morel lent his aid to redeem the wreck of his fortunes, and conciliate in his behalf the good will of his fellow-citizens, he opened his arms to his repentant friend, and consented to efface the recollection of all former feuds, by the union of their offspring.

Relieved from its cumbrous load of ostentation, the manor of Varengeville, as the abode of a family affecting only the condition of thriving burghers and faithful subjects of the King, became a far happier spot than at the epoch of its more ambitious destinies. Ango rejoiced to resign to his son the care of his commercial enterprises; limiting his own efforts to the arrangements and cultivation of the delicious gardens of the manor, and to the task of retiring, hand in hand, with his altered and subdued partner, into the vale of years.

A new generation had arisen round his knees ere he was summoned to his great account; a generation bearing the united names of Ango and Morel, to whom their grandsire's last admonition was couched in nearly the words of the dying Wolsey—

> I charge ye, fling away ambition;
> By that sin fell the angles. How, then, shall man,
> The image of his Maker, hope to win by it?

The manor-house, now converted into a farm, still retains striking traces of the remarkable man by whom it was called into existence. Carved medallions of stone, containing heraldic devices, heads of negroes and Indians (the people of the countries with whom the rich burgher of Dieppe held traffic,) still adorn the external walls; as well as portraits of Francis I, and Diana of Poitiers. Some vestiges also remain of the far-famed frescos which adorned the chimney-

pieces; and an open gallery of carved stone, adorned with Saxon arches and columns, that might afford a model to modern architects. But the full-length portraits of Ango and his wife, which, till within a few years, were to be seen enchased in the wall above a stone mantle-piece of rich design, have wholly disappeared; as well as the marble slab, which, after its inhumation in 1550, in the Church of St. Jacques, in the chapel bearing his name, was placed, by the pious care of his son, over the remains of John Ango.

A far more permanent testimony to the career of Ango, is borne in the decline of the town of Dieppe, accounted, before his time, one of the most flourishing in France. From the moment of his elevation, not a petty capitalist of the place but aspired to the honors of nobility. The high-sounding title of "Viscount" Ango,diverted all their thoughts from their herring and cod fisheries, and oriental commerce. The passion for ennoblement became universal; and being judiciously played upon by the King's ministers, ever ready to bestow tinsel in exchange for gold, scarcely an independent merchant of the burgh but was enabled to sport his hour in the glittering courts of royalty. The sole object of the industry and the ehrichment of the Dieppois, appeared the acquirement of empty honors; and the burghers thus ennobled, soon followed up their madness by consecrating their sons to the army and the church, with a view to the acquirement of further honorary distinctions. Commerce was gradually neglected, and civic duties were disregarded.

By degrees, the dockyards of Dieppe fell into decay. The port no longer sent forth adventurous fleets to the great Indies, or hazarded establishments in the Western hemisphere. Its efficient men were fighting in the civil wars, or making *congees* at the Louvre, St. Germains, or Versailles. The whole navy of a town which had once exulted in the princely privateers of Ango, capable of striking terror into kings, became finally reduced to a few fishing-boats, and as many ill-built brigs, trading with Norway for her deals, and Gascony for her wines.—Even the magnificent churches of St. Jacques and St. Remy, lacking the wealthy patrons who had loaded them with benefactions, fell into decay; but *this* defacement is not wholly attributable to the neglect of the notables of the city.

When, in the zenith of Ango's pride and prosperity, the unfortunate Mary Stuart, about to embark from Dieppe for Scotland, condescended to become his guest, the host of the young Queen took delight in pointing out to her royal notice, that not a man among the two thousand wearing his colors, who were ranged along the harbor to do her honor, was infected by the doctrines of the new schism of Protestantism.

"Have a care, Master Ango!"—was the reply of the royal daughter of the house of Guise; "you have unsafe neighbors here; and spiritual infection, God wot, is easily extended."

The words of Mary of Scotland were more speedily verified than might have been expected. Within a year, the worship of the Huguenots was established in the town of Dieppe; and within two, John Knox, the Reformer, was preaching the new doctrines, unmolested, in the Cathedral of St. Remy! Some years later, one of the severest actions of the Leaguers was fought in the adjoining valley of Arques, in whose castle Henry IV had taken up his position.

True to the faith of his ancestors, and schooled by the wise lessons of Sister Genevieve and the afflicting example of his parents, Ango the younger held with moderation the even tenor of his way. By the intermarriage of his only daughter with the grand nephew of Jacques Morel, the manor of Varengeville was preserved for nearly a century in the family; which, in the reign of Louis XIV, became extinct.

From that period, the lands were divided; and the house, degraded by neglect was converted into a farm. Yet even now, when visited by travellers attracted by the beauty of its site, and the interest of remains so valuable, as being authentically characteristic of the domestic architecture of the sixteenth century, the manor of Varengeville is pointed out by the peasants of the environs, as "THE HOUSE OF ANGO!"

END OF VOL. I

THE

# MAN OF FORTUNE,

AND

## OTHER TALES.

BY MRS. GORE,

AUTHORESS OF 'GREVILLE,'—'LOVER AND THE HUSBAND,' &c. &c.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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# THE QUEEN'S COMFIT-MAKER,

## A LEGEND OF TOTTENHAM CROSS.

"A RIGHT noble bequest!—a most Christian devisement!" exclaimed Master Ebenezer Trackit, the notary of Tottenham Cross, folding his hands over his sober doublet, and fixing his eyes contemplatively upon the hugh pewter standish, well garnished with goose quills, which had been placed before him for the purpose of drawing out heads of the testamentary dispositions of Balthazar Sanchez, a wealthy retired citizen, whom his enemies called "the Spanish Jew," and the haughty esquires whose lands bordered upon his own, stigmatised with equal contempt as "Sanchez, the comfit-maker."—"All and several those excellent lands and messuages, situated betwixt the northern bank of the Mosel and the farms of Leecroft and Bishopstone," resumed the notary; "the same being estimated at the annual fee and rent of four hundred marks or upwards, lawful money of the realm, to be had in perpetual trust by such person or persons as the testator may see fit to appoint, for the erection, entertainment, and maintenance, of a tenement or tenements, for the comfort and refuge of eight individuals of the aged poor of the good parish of Tottenham. Such, as I conceive, Master Balthazar, was the purport of your dictation?"

"Even so. For the endowment of alms-houses to con-

tain eight poor people of this parish," replied his employer, from the comfortable easy-chair in which he sat ensconced; and, as he spoke, the old man turned towards the saturnine notary a swarthy but hearty countenance, clearly indicating that the indisposition which had determined him to settle the disposal of his worldly gear, was of accidental occurrence. Balthazar's seventy-fifth year found him healthy, wealthy, and wise; easy in mind and body; and, though certain of his neighbors, envious of the old gentleman's worldly prosperity, presumed to infer that the healthfulness of his body arose, in a great measure, from there being little or no mind to operate upon its condition, it would appear to be better fortune than is usually decreed to the lot of fools, for the favorite servitor of an intolerant Papist king to have laid up, like Balthazar Sanchez, store of riches and honors during the ascendancy of her most Protestant Majesty, Queen Elizabeth.

Among these, was his present associate and counsellor, Ebenezer Trackit. Nevertheless, albeit the notary had heretofore inferred and argued respectfully of his client's mental capacities, the charge now entrusted to him to execute, somewhat staggered his confidence.

"An estate of four hundred marks per annum!" was Master Trackit's mental commentary on the text. "A third portion or more of his possessions to be flung away in bootless alms upon the ungrateful poor of a foreign nation, without so much as the common return of praise and thanksgiving; since it is his will that the benefaction remain a nameless dole; and since, even were the comfit-maker's name blazoned in Roman capitals on the frontal of his almshouses, my mind misgives me that scarcely a knee within would bend in supplication for the soul of one whom the ragamuffins of Tottenham parish designate in their cups no otherwise than 'the Spanish Jew.'"

"Are the words set down?" quoth Master Balthazar, his patience at length outwearied by the length of the notary's cogitations, from which he rightly argued opposition to the purport of his bequest.

"Methought it were safer to allow space for your worship's reflection upon the terms of so munificent an act!" replied the notary, twirling his thumbs.

"Tut, tut!" cried the old Spaniard, impatiently. "Am I, then, so sorry an ass, friend Trackit, as to entitle you in the supposition that I am disposing, on *impulse* solely (the impulse of a hale man suffering from his first twinge of bodily pain,) of a third part of my estate? I tell ye no,—and again and again, *No*, Master Notary. For many a year of my past life, such hath been my settled resolve; and I say unto you once more,—take,—write,—that my last will be accomplished."

"Even as you desire, worshipful sir," replied the notary, slowly advancing his hand towards the pewter standish; "yet am I in duty bound to warn and admonish you——"

"The deuce you are!" interrupted the Spaniard. "I should have surmized that the warnings and admonishments wherewith I was favored yestermorn by his pious Reverence, Longwind the rector, might suffice for a season."

"The warnings of his Reverence were, in all probability, of a spiritual kind, and regarded your soul's salvation. Mine, Master Balthazar, concern your temporal interests, and are, consequently, more germane to our present purpose," snuffled the lawyer.

"The time is, I take it, come or coming with me, when spiritual and temporal must be so blended in my account that no time ought to be lost in disposing of either," cried the old Spaniard. "Nay, good friend, a truce with superfluous civilities. I ask no compliments either on my looks or condition. I know that I am not an ailing man—that I carry my threescore years and fifteen nimbly enough; but I also know that I have lived my appointed time; that the loan of life apportioned me by my benificent Creator hath reached its term; that the great liability is due; and the grim bailiff, Death, justified in forcing an entrance into my dwelling. Let the aged subject of our aged sovereign, therefore, hasten to set his house in order; and for the third and last time he bids you, Master Notary, take, write, and record his last will."

"Your farm on the northward bank of the Mosel, betwixt Leecroft and Bishopstone?" demanded Master Trackit, dwelling emphatically on every syllable of the inquiry, and leisurely resuming his pen. And this time, as if to avoid

further parley or preliminary, the venerable testator contended himself with and affirmative nod of the head.

"It is written!" snuffled Ebenezer, after a minute or two, perceiving that his patron, well, or sick, or sorry, was in no humor to be further crossed. "It is written, and shall be fairly engrossed with the rest for your future signature. Meanwhile, assure yourself that so prodigal a donation to people nowise akin to you in blood, nature, language, nor nation, will be resented, and probably disputed by process of law, by those whose affinity entitles them, in right, to your inheritance."

"Nowise akin to me in blood?"—cried the comfit-maker, turning fiercely upon his confidential adviser. "Is not every son of Adam akin to *all* the sons of Adam?—Is it not written by the great Founder of our faith (who, were every other evidence of divine nature laid aside, had by that alone deserved to be called the Son of God)—is it not written, I say, in the word of Christ, that all men are brethren? and what right have my far-off nephews or nieces to dispute with me touching the claims of our common kindred?—Nowise akin to me in blood, nation, or language, quotha?—Under what governance, I pray you, have I lived for the last half century?—What language hath breathed in mine ears the words of kindness?—What sovereign hath been my liege?—What laws have been my protection?—Why even those of this fair island of Britain, whose air I have respired in peace, and whose earth will shortly shelter the dust that hath so long burthened her soil! My home hath been among you—my happiness among you. The gold and silver I have amassed were earned out of the havings of Englishmen. Who, therefore, shall dispute the justice which would award to these, my benefactors, a fraction of the all I owe them?"

"Nevertheless," replied the notary, unmoved by the old man's generous enthusiasm, "the law looks with a jealous eye upon the testamentary caprices of old age. The pretext of heirship is apt to be favored by the grave personages to whom is intrusted the distribution of property."

"Away with you! To no person or personage, howsoever grave, howsoever influential, is intrusted the distribution of property, over which the lawful possessor hath exercised

the right of either gift or bequest!" exclaimed Balthazar. "My estate came not by inheritance. My estate is no life-hold possession, to be derived by my posterity from my ancestry through my transitory enjoyment. This good house over my head,—yonder field basking in the sunshine,—are mine by no kingly or queenly grant, to some far-off progenitors, in requital of his partisanship, or in guerdon for his servility. I worked for them—I drudged for them—I spared for them. I bought them, little by little, field by field, with the earnings for which I sacrificed my morning rest—my midnight slumber. And are not these mine to dispose of?—Think you I would have submitted to labor while others were sleeping, or to fast when others were feasting, save in the certitude that the fruit of my toils was to lie at my own absolute disposal?

"Perhaps not—probably not; but the grave, Master Balthazar, is a gulf that swalloweth up a man's thoughts and resolves. The coffin-lid closeth over him, and his place knoweth him no longer. The jurisprudence of the country provideth a mind for those who are no longer capable of reflection; and so soon as you are debarred by the great decree of Nature from advocating your own cause, my word upon it, the Queen's learned bench will determine."

"*What* will it determine?—That a man may not do what he likes with his own?"—screamed Balthazar, harrassed beyond his patience.

"That a man may not do what he likes with his own when he hath outlived the faculties that ought to govern his likings and mislikings," replied the notary, calmly taking the pen from his ear, and replacing it in the standish.

"God's death! Would you assert me to be in my dotage?—would you declare me *non compos mentis?*"—vociferated the the old Spaniard, while his brow contracted, and his lips grew livid with rage.

"Would *I* assert?—would *I* declare?—Heaven's mercy and justice forbid!"—replied Master Ebenezer, in a tone of deprecation. "But what are *my* poor assertions to the purpose—more especially while your worshipful self is here in the flesh, to prove your own ludicity of intellect? No, Master Balthazar!—It is when the bell hath tolled, and the stone been rolled to the mouth of the sepulchre, that those

who come after you will, perforce of bribery or persuasion, probably induce such evidence of singularity of manners and customs, as would assuredly determine any court of justice in the kingdom to set aside the will which you are now troubling yourself to dictate to my humble transcription."

"Set aside, on plea of aberration of intellect, a will expressly setting forth, in the preamble, that *I*, Balthazar Sanchez, native of the kingdom of Castile, some time comfit-maker to his most Catholic Majesty, Don Philip II, and now resident in the parish of Tottenham Cross, by London, being in a sound state of body and mind, do give and bequeath—I say, Master Notary, being in a sound state of body and mind—*in a sound state of body and mind*;—is it not so set down?"

"It is," replied Ebenezer, somewhat overawed by his vehemence. "Nevertheless, it were no difficult matter to prove, good sir," he continued, taking advantage of the old Spaniard's loss of breath, "that, on the 6th day of June, in the year of Grace 1601, wherein you are pleased thus to record the soundness of your body and mind, the said body had been, for the first time in your mortal life, visited by indications of no less fatal a distemper than paralysis of the lower limbs!"

"'Tis false!" cried Balthazar, starting up; and, in spite of the long brocaded wrapping-gown in which he was enveloped, standing for a moment erect, with no other support than the pressure of his shrivelled hand upon the table—"'Tis utterly false!"

"Then, old Dosem of the Market Place lies in his teeth," muttered the notary, between his own. "At least," he resumed aloud, "you will admit that you have recently received leechcraft at his hands?"

"I sent for the meddling numskull to administer a cataplasm to the shoulder of Zora yonder," cried Sanchez, pointing to a fine Spanish pointer that lay on a rug beside his escritoire,—"the poor beast having been hurt by the awkwardness of my nephew-in-law, Sir Carnaby, who stumbled over her with the cup of scalding diet-drink he was officiously hastening to offer me. But I see how 'tis!—The whole batch of you are in league against me!—the ass, my

nephew-in-law, will suborn the paltry compounder of boluses to swear that at the period of inditing my will, I was infirm of body; and my some-time agent and scrivener, Master Ebenezer Trackit, to prove that I was infirm of mind!—My household servants will testify that these two sapient witnesses were admitted to my privacy; and the law of the kingdom will forthwith issue a posthumous statute of lunacy against a man whose head is as clear as its own, and whose conscience clearer! And thus, my will is to be defeated; the poor mulcted of their rights; and the jackanapes, Sir Carnaby Savile (who married with a comfit-maker's grand-neice in hopes of appropriating his houses and lands as heir-at-law) will be enabled to sport twenty new doublets per month instead of ten; while my lady, his wife, flaunts it at Court as brave as the best gentlewoman born!—I'faith, 'tis enough to *drive* a man mad or into his grave, to think on't!"—

"Compose yourself, good Master Sanchez—compose yourself,"—ejaculated the cunning notary. "All that you apprehend may be obviated, provided we take care of the wording of your bequest; and, above all, in the selection of the gentlemen of trust to whom you propose to bequeath the execution of your will. Let them be such as Sir Carnaby Savile, in cunning or authority, may not overmatch. For the latter, if I may presume to suggest, let the Chancellor for the time being, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, whoever may fill that honourable and sacred function, be two of the four trustees of the purposed charity. For the remaining two, I would fain suggest, under submission to your better judgment, the Rector of Tottenham, as being especially interested in bettering the condition of its parish poor; and my humble self, of all men living, best able to prove before her Majesty's courts of justice, the sanity of the worshipful testator and the motives of the bequest."

"Good faith, then, slight evidence may suffice!" cried old Sanchez, with a sneer. "For what know ye of my motives?—and how, pray, are you to prove to the Consistory Court that I am not a crack-brained humorist, intent upon defrauding my rightful heirs for the sake of a whimsey?"

Master Ebenezer Trackit shrugged his shoulders. His client was hard to please. He would neither submit to be suspected of imbecility, nor asserted of sound intellect.

"Nevertheless," resumed the fractious gentleman, ashamed, perhaps, of his own petulance—"I must, perforce, content myself with such instruments as Providence affords me. It may further the accomplishment of my purpose that a pettifogging lawyer is interested in the scheme. For the sake of public influence, therefore, Master Trackit, inscribe, as trustees of the charity, the names of the two officials highest in authority in Church and State; and, for the sake of professional zeal, the vicar, and the attorney. Put your own finger in the pie, since I perceive that the pie will else be marred in the baking!"—

Master Trackit hastened to vindicate himself. His honoured patron wholly misjudged him. He had no wish to be included in the trusteeship—no desire to assist in making or marring the act so ignobly stigmatized by its benevolent deviser.

"Be it as I have said!"—cried Balthazar, weary of the altercation. "And now, be off with you to your desk. By this hour to-morrow, let the parchment be fairly engrossed; and when we have read it over together, ere my signature and signet be affixed in presence of such fitting witnesses as I shall summon for the purpose, you, in your turn, Master Notary, must listen to the recital of the early history of my life."

Ebenezer started in delighted astonishment.

"Seeing that, as you may have to testify of me and my secret springs of action, it is at least fitting you should know the man of whom you may have to speak; and of whom, whether Jew or Gentile, sinner or saint, at present you know no more than that he was a native of Old Castile, and sometime comfit-maker to his most Catholic Majesty Don Philip, King of Spain, of blessed memory, as in my will set down."

"And a dutiful and faithful subject of Elizabeth, Queen of England, whom God preserve!" added the notary, with professional precision.

"That, as it may be!" muttered Balthazar Sanchez; while Ebenezer gathered up his papers, rose deliberately from his high-backed chair, and looked round in search of his trencher-cap. "Meanwhile, be diligent. To-morrow, sir, at three of the afternoon;—to day, God speed you!"

As the notary emerged from the gateway of Master Balthazar's mansion (whereon, from privilege of place, as honorary comfit-maker to the Court, the arms of England were emblazoned within a garter, having a lion and a griffin for supporters, and the initials "E. R." annexed, in honour of her gracious Majesty the Queen, as may be seen even at this present writing),* nothing could exceed his exultation at the prospect of penetrating into the mysterious fortunes of an individual, concerning whom so much had been said and surmised in the neighbourhood, as Master Balthazar Sanchez. The prospect of becoming trustee of his munificent donation, including right of attorneyship, and chance of litigation of the same, was nothing in comparison with such an insight into his private history as would enable him from that day forth and forevermore, to taunt and tantalize on this subject the inquisitive soul of his gabbling helpmate, Mistress Dorothy Trackit.

On this score, however, the notary reckoned without his host; for on resuming his seat in the dingy parlour of his client the following day, the first word uttered by Balthazar, was a condition of secrecy, solemn enough to appal even the soul of a notary. So manifest, indeed, was the awe of poor Ebenezer, that Master Sanchez instantly invited him to reinforce his courage by a deep draught of Malaga wine, of which two kinds, the sweet and the dry, stood in antique flagons on the board; and, beside them, certain parcel-gilt saucers of rare confectionary, compounded, probably, under the personal inspection of the venerable host, by whom, as history informs us, the noble art of comfit-making was first introduced into the realms of Britain.

"Taste, I pray you, of yonder candied pistachio nuts," said the old Spaniard, with a smile more benevolent than he had hitherto vouchsafed to the man of the law. "Their flavour (which hath been commended of more kings, princes, and royal personages, than there are kernels in the dish) may serve to take off the ill-taste of the words I have compelled you to utter.

"On this especial confection, moreover, Master Ebenezer, is founded the fabric of my fortunes! By this rare in-

* The house occupied by Balthazer Sanchez at Tottenham is now the George and Vulture Inn.

vention, did your humble servant attract the notice and secure the favour of that memorable prince, on whose dominions the sun did never set, but on whose mind abided impenetrable darkness. God pity him!—he is gone to his dread account; and, sinful soul as I am, rather, in the day of judgment, would I be poor Balthazar, the stewer of pruins, than Don Philip of Old Spain and New, the roaster of his fellow-men!"

The notary cast an anxious glance round the chamber. In those times, sovereigns were not to be thus lightly judged. Though Elizabeth of England was far gone in moral and physical decay, the law slept not,—the scaffold was still active;—nor did the hangman, like the old comfit-maker, hold an honorary function at court.

"Fear not!" quoth Balthazar, replying to his look of mute consternation. "These walls are of notable thickness, as the bills of cost of my masons and bricklayers can attest; seeing that, in my orders for their construction, I purposed them to outlive the existence of many a more lordly roof-tree, in order to testify of the poor comfit-maker to ages yet unborn. Be of good cheer, friend Ebenezer! No eaves-droppers are at hand. With a view to the free discussion of the matters between us, I have dispatched, hither and thither, the varlets, my serving-men; and there be none left besides ourselves within the lintel of my door, saving deaf Margery the cook-maid, who is absorbed in her afternoon diversion, mumbling the penitential psalms in her chimney-corner, while she basteth the roast for supper. We are as safe, man, as mice in a malt-tub!—"

Thus re-assured, Master Ebenezer filled his mouth once more with the pistachio comfits pushed towards him, in their saucer of golden filigree, by his kindly host; and, reclining against a high-backed ebony chair, which, to a modern lounger would be an instrument of torture, assumed an attentive attitude, while Master Balthazar Sanchez cleared his throat, and delivered himself as follows:—

"Allow me to preface the history of my birth by that of my earliest consciousness. The first thing I remember is tender entreatment in a small farm-house, pleasantly situated some four leagues from Madrid, between a straggling wood and a shallow river, which afforded endless varieties

of sport and pastime. The old farmer and his wife who fed and clothed me, spoke of me, among our scanty neighbours, as the orphan of a deceased kinsman; but so indulgent were they in their care, that, even in those years when the heart of childhood hungers and thirsts after parental tenderness, I never seemed to miss the fondness of father or mother. Not that I was indiscreetly pampered;—the habits of the place were humble and frugal. But I was a healthy happy child, left to the free use of my limbs, to the full enjoyment of earth, air, and water. The river, with its bulrushes for spears, its spotted trout for sport,—the wood with its wild fruits, wild flowers, wild squirrels, wilder song-birds,—were mine to have, if not to hold. I was allowed to wander at will; to see the sun go down and rise again unchanged on the morrow; the moon vanish and re-appear with an altered face; the stars revolve and re-revolve, the same, yet ever varying. There was no one to molest me with restrictions, nor plague me with learning; no doating mother to shriek when I approached the margin of the stream, or fall into a swoon if I climbed the lofty cork-trees in search of a finch's nest: there was not a soul, in short, to interpose betwixt me and our universal Mother, Almighty Nature. Failing the ordinary ties of tenderness, I looked accordingly into her eyes for smiles,—I hung upon her lips for love,—I clung to her bosom for nourishment and joy!—I was alone with her, alone in a desert,—alone at that holy age when there is bliss unmingled with awe in utter solitude!

"It did not then occur to me to inquire why I was never called upon to assist the labours of Pepito and Dolores;—why all around me were toiling, and I, at rest. I perceived only that these indulgent people had authority over me, which, when it suited them, they exercised; for once, when gazing at a far-off line of mountains bordering the horizon, I expressed a wish to explore their summits, and announced my intention of being off some summer-day, on an excursion into the Sierra, the old people denied me so resolutely, that I found my purpose was only to be accomplished by truancy.

"Is not the air good, and are not the woods hereabouts green enow for thy liking, child?' demanded old Pepito, taking the pipe from his mouth. "Beware, Balthazar, beware!—A league's space from our humble gates, and there

is no safety for thee on earth !—Abide with us in peace and safety ; or depart, and die the death of a dog.'

"There was something so emphatic in the old man's words and looks, that, though his threat was mere unsupported assertion, it sunk deep into my heart. I prepared myself for obedience with all the simplicity of a child. But the following day, Dolores, as if compassionating my restlessness, bad me array myself in my best and accompany her to church, whither she had never yet suffered me to bear her company, The farm was a solitary place, remote from village or hamlet ; and the chapel, to which the good woman was accustomed to repair for the performance of her devotions, was attached to the convent of Sancta Benedicta, situated about half a league higher up the Manzanares. In the course of my solitary excursion I had often looked with awe upon its moated parapet. There was something in the lofty walls, rising almost to the level of the domed turret-tops, and above all, in the huge black iron cross surmounting the entrance, which spoke wonders to my imagination. Wandering near it at eventide, I had listened with deep emotion to the tolling of the Angelus, and at times even caught the solemn diapason of the choir, chanting their evening hymn to the Virgin. The nuns (named with deep reverence by the neighbouring peasantry as healers of their ills and comforters of their tribulations) presented to my mind a species of lesser divinities, the invisible origin of mighty and manifold good. Often had I longed to look on the unimaginable faces of those whose lips emitted sounds of such ethereal sweetness, and whose lives were gentle as their voices ; and when, following the footsteps of Dolores, I entered the narrow wicket, crossed the silent court, and slipped into the vast chapel, where only a few country people were kneeling on the marble pavement (the nuns being concealed from sight behind the sweeping green curtains of the choir,) so overpowering to my senses was the influence of the rolling music of the organ, the fragrant clouds of frankincense, the gorgeous ceiling of the gilded domes, and the deserted solitude of the aisles, that, by an impulsive movement, I dropped on my knees upon the marble floor beside my conductress, raising my hands, and calling in spirit on the name of God, as I had often done amid the

green solitudes of the forest, or under the overarching canopy of heaven.

"It was no small disappointment, nevertheless, that a glimpse of my terrestrial angels was denied me; an when at length, a mumbling, greasy-faced old gentleman, ascended the pulpit, and, with a superabundance of groans and gestures, began to preach the religion of persecution, of flames, faggots, and eternal damnation, the spell of my piety was dissolved; and right glad was I when the cessation of his discourse entitled my companion to make her exit from the chapel. To my surprise, instead of re-crossing the court-yard towards the wicket, Dolores made towards a side door, and entered a damp vestibule. She had business, it appeared with the Superior. An aged nun offered to conduct her to the Mother Abbess's sanctuary, bidding me abide quietly behind; and so little did this first interview with one of my cloistered angels tend to stimulate my curiosity, that it afforded me small pleasure when, after ten minutes' absence the conductress of Dolores returned, and bade me follow her to the presence of the Superior.

"'Put off thy cap and shoes, child!—' was the admonition of the old lay sister, as we reached the door; and, thus abjectly prepared, I entered a suit of chambers, which to eyes familiar with the bare walls and rude rafters of Pepito's farm, appeared secondary only to the temple from which I had recently emerged. A succession of lofty doors of polished wood, incased in white or black marble, heavily but richly carved, gave us access through several chambers hung with tapestry, whereon to my inexperienced eyes, the figures seemed endowed with life and motion; till we reached a small oratory, the stained windows of which diffused a supernatural hue over a tall cross of ebony, supporting the tortured body of the Redeemer, sculptured in the purest ivory. I forgot to tender my obesiance to the presiding mistress of the place, so thoroughly was my attention absorbed by the saintly sweetness of that dying countenance, and the exquiste beauty of the work!

"'On thy knees, boy, to the reverend Superior,' ejaculated Dolores. But the boy heard her not. His eyes were riveted upon the crucifix.

"'Your Reverence sees!'—exclaimed Dolores, 'If such

be the first impression, what may not be anticipated from a continuous residence in the community! Snatch, madam, O snatch this brand from the fire!—The boy's sole chance of safety on earth, of salvation hereafter, lies in finding shelter under the roof of the daughters of heaven! Another week, and the restlessness of his humor will bring him within reach of his enemies.'

"Instead of replying, the Abbess kept deliberately surveying me; while I, in return, gazed with wondering admiration upon the lofty figure and commanding countenance, set off by the rich robing of her vocation.

"'Be it so,' said she, at length. 'I adopt thee, little outcast, into our house. Let him be taken to the confectionary, where sisters Clara and Ofilia will forthwith instruct him in the mysteries which have rendered our convent famous among the banquetries of St. Ildefonso.'

"'Kneel, child—kneel, and crave the blessing of thy benefactress!' cried Dolores, apparently overcome with joy at the prospects unfolding for her protege; and, though sorely puzzled to conceive what peculiar advantage I was to derive from the protection conceded, or what might be the nature of the mysteries into which I was to be inaugurated, —so awe-inspiring was the aspect of the towering Lady Abbess, arrayed in her stole and cross of office,—that down I went at her feet, while, with her shrivelled hand imposed upon my head, she pronounced her benediction.

"On striking lightly on a bell of golden fretwork appended to the desk of the oratory, the lay sister again appeared to conduct us forth; and after threading an infinity of gloomy passages, we suddenly found ourselves in an airy vaulted chamber, the floor of which was of the tessellated marble of the country, with scattered tables of the same costly material, whereat sat divers sisters of the order, enrobed with scrupulous neatness;—one shredding rose-leaves into a wicker basket, another carefully separating the petals of a heap of orange blossoms, a third pouring clarified honey through a sieve of snow-white lawn; while several others stood beside little stoves or furnaces, slowly stirring certain delicate confections, the aroma of which imparted a most appetizing flavor to the atmosphere. Such was the confectionary of the convent of Sancta Benedicta; and,

young and ignorant as I was, the processes in progress around me, and the death-like silence in which they were performed, were almost as startling as the crucibles and alembics of an alchymist!—

"The object of my presence there was soon explained; and, though the glances cast upon me by sisters Ofilia and Clara, to whose hands I had been commended by the Abbess, were far from conciliating, I was too much overpowered by the novelty of the scene to offer much opposition, when my foster-mother took leave of me on her departure, promising to furnish me on the morrow with my scanty wardrobe, and exhorting me to be docile and submissive.

"'But I shall return to the farm—I shall soon return to the farm?'—I demanded, clinging to her hand.

"Dolores shook her head.

"'Nay, but I must and will return!'—cried I.—'My garden—my faithful dog—my poor thrush— my——

"'They shall be cared for, Balthazar,' replied my foster-mother, with a sadder countenance than I had ever seen her wear; 'but I know thee too well, boy, and love thee too well, to renew for thee an enjoyment of a lawless liberty, such as would surely lead to thy destruction.'

"In vain were my remonstrances. The more I entreated, the more Dolores hasetned her departure, lest my reluctance should dispose the good nuns harshly towards me? and no sooner was she gone, than the lay sisters gave me over in charge to the old gardener of the convent, whose hovel was to be my sleeping apartment. Tonsured, bathed, and clad in the linen ephod of a novice, I was re-admitted on the morrow to the presence of my instructresses, and entrusted with the grating of some ripe citron peels, the delicate fragrance of which almost reconciled me to the task.

"Fear not!—I am not about to inaugurate you, good Master Ebenezer, into the arts and mysteries of my calling. Suffice it that, as in all other apprenticeships, that which at first diverted me as a sport, as a task grew tedious. I soon loathed the close confinement imposed upon me—the heated and sickly atmosphere of the confectionary—the penances imposed on me for trifling blunders—the cuffs bestowed when some vessel or implement of silver was presented tarnished to the discriminating eye of Sister Ofilia. My young

limbs burned to refresh themselves in the limpid brook,—my young heart to expand, according to its wont, amid summer leaves and joyous birds. My sole recreation consisted in an occasional hour's labor with old Pedro in the convent garden; the high walls of which caused even the poor plants and flowers to spindle up towards the blessed light of the sky, even as my own soul was aspiring towards a happier sphere.

"Idle were my repinings! Easy as had been my ingress to the convent, egress was impossible. A rash attempt at escape was punished, not only with the discipline, but with a month's confinement in a solitary cell; and so happy were the results of my seclusion, that, on the cessation of my punishment, I began to find even the air of the confectionary balmy, and the gossip of the old nuns cheering. From that period, all intercourse with poor Dolores (who had been accustomed to visit the convent on Sabbaths and feast-days) was denied me; wisely, perhaps,—for the less I recurred to the farm and its rural freedom, the better I was likely to content myself with the narrow limits and formal platbands of Sancta Benedicta, with silent hosts of white-robed sisters gliding like ghosts along the dim alleys.

"Meanwhile, my education progressed. I was instructed, not only in the secrets of the confectionary, but the grand mysteries of the Christian faith. I became a devout Catholic, as well as an expert comfit-maker. On my entrance into the convent, I was scarcely ten years old; and, ere I attained my fifteenth year, even the envy of Sisters Clara and Ofilia admitted me to be a master of my art. Already I had defied them by more than one chef-d'œuvre of inventive genius, especially by certain comfits of candied pistachio nuts, scented with amber, and enrolled in leaf of gold, concocted as an express token of duty to the Lady Abbess, when she despatched her annual offering of confectionary to the most reverend Archbishop of Toledo. Yet, strange to tell, the older I grew, and the more I excelled, the more I was thwarted and macerated; and though I had now tamed down my spirit to submit unresistingly to the heavy penances imposed upon me, I sometimes cursed my life for very bitterness.

"One day, when after having suffered some syrup to lose its color on the stove, of which sister Clara was in need for the candying of some double violets whereof it was her custom to forward a gift every spring to an eminent canon of the Church of Oviedo, a distant kinsman of her own (or, as the old gardener, Pedro, had hinted to me, her unavowed son), I was suddenly summoned to the presence of the Superior, whom I had not seen for months.—Satisfied that I was about to undergo a severe reprimand, and, probably some new mode of penance, I could scarcely conceal my sullenness, as, with downcast eyes, I entered her august presence and kneeled down to receive the signification of her pleasure.

"'Balthazar, my poor lad!'—said she, addressing me in a tone of more amenity than was her wont, 'I have grievous tidings to communicate to thee.'

"Instantly recurring to the farm, and those who had supplied the place of kinsmanship to my childhood, I hazarded in an inquiring tone the name of Pepito and Dolores.

"'They are well, or I, at least, have no news of their mischance,' said the Abbess, with dignified contempt. 'The intelligence I would unfold, boy, is of far more cruel import than the decease of a Castilian peasant. An unhappy change hath occurred in thy destinies, Balthazar. Thou art about to quit the convent!—'

"My heart leapt within me at the word.

"'*For ever!*' persisted the Abbess in a sepulchral tone, discerning perhaps, the levity with which I was hearkening to her announcement.

"My countenance again brightened. But I judiciously concealed my joy, by inclining my head towards the earth; and, conceiving that her denunciation had now taken proper effect, the Abbess attempted to neutralize the terrors of her intelligence.

"'I own to thee, my son,' she resumed, 'that even wert thou not summoned hence by unimpugnable authority, it had been impossible to prolong much longer thy sojourn within these sacred gates; whence those of thy sex are, by the vow of our holy order, rigorously excluded. Thou art no longer a child, Balthazar'—(God knows, the venerable lady

and her coadjutresses had treated me as nothing else!)—'and, in regard to thine advancing years, I had purposed to dispose of thee at Whitsuntide in the household of my grand-nephew, the Bishop of Leon. But heaven is above all! Thy destinies are removed out of my hands; and I am forced, my poor youth, to leave half accomplished the good deed of thy conversion, and surrender thee to the perils and dangers of the world.'

"Dear perils! blessed dangers!—how the mere menace caused my young blood to thrill!—The only perils I could figure to myself were those by wood or wave, avalanches, mountain torrents, and sea-storms, such as I had read of in the lives of the saints.

"'In a word, Balthazar,' said the old lady who had favored me with so many, 'thou art away to court!'

"Involuntarily I raised my joyous face to gaze open-mouthed on the superior.

"'The Prince of Asturias, whom the mother of God and her blessed saints preserve,' quoth she, 'hath sent for thee to St. Ildefonso.'

"For me, madam!—the Infant hath sent for ME?" was all I could articulate.

"'A grace for which thou art indebted to my consideration,' resumed the Abbess. 'Some days ago (the very evening when I was horror-struck by the assertion of Sister Ofilia, that, notwithstanding her express prohibition, thou hadst twice been seen lurking near the garden whereto the sisters of the house are admitted for their hour of recreation), an express arrived here from my noble kinsman the Archbishop, requiring the recipe for compounding certain comfits of pistachio nuts, scented with amber, whereof Don Philip had partaken when, being seized one day, after a prolonged sitting of the council, with a cough, from irritation and exhaustion, the Archbishop dutifully produced his comfit-box till better refreshment was forthcoming. His Highness' palate, Balthazar, was tickled with the flavor of that idle invention of thy leisure!'—

"O happy comfits!—O thrice fortunate pistachios,"—cried I, in a transport of loyalty.

"'But instead of contenting myself with forwarding to

my lord the Archbishop,' resumed the Abbess, 'the instructions of which he stood in need, I acquainted him that the author of the auspicious confection was wholly at his service. His lordship, it appears, hastened to make the same dutiful tender to the prince; and, lo! I have before me the sign-manual of Don Philip, attaching thee from this day forth at a salary of one hundred reals monthly, to the service of St. Ildefonso.' "

"Let no man presume to opine from what quarter will blow the trade wind of his fortunes!" exclaimed the notary, fancying that some comment was required of him. "Promoted at court per favor of a dish of comfits!—The Lord be good to us!—Parchment and pounce are little likely to speed a poor English sinner so far as even the porter's lodge of Windsor Castle. Marry it must have been a right happy day, Master Balthazar, that set you free from the bondage of the old women of Sancta Benedicta?"

"Sweet and sour commingle in every human triumph," replied the confectioner. "At the moment of my departure for Madrid, laden with the gifts and good wishes of my benefactresses, I could almost have wept over my emancipation. And lo! just as the breath of the free air without the walls, and the long-lost sight of the dancing waters and quivering trees began to restore my consciousness of joy, a withered hand was laid upon my bridle-reign, and, drawing me aside out of hearing of the royal courier I was about to accompany to St. Ildefonso, poor Dolores whispered a word of warning in my ear."

"'I received thy message,' muttered she, 'that the peremptory commands laid on thee admitted no leisure for a visit to the farm; and forthwith hurried hither to arrest thy departure. Balthazar Sanchez! Go not, O go not to Madrid! Avoid St. Ildefonso!—Tremble at the aspect of Don Philip of Spain.—There is not an hour's safety for thee, my son, after quitting the gates of this convent!'

"'Explain, explain," cried I, finding that the courier was growing impatient.

"'I cannot—I dare not! Life and death are balanced over thy head by a single hair; yet can I do no more than bid thee beware!' faltered Dolores.

"In a few incoherent words, I explained the peremptory necessity of obedience to the royal command; referring her to the Lady Abbess for confirmation of my assertion.

"'Since needs must, then,' murmured the affectionate woman with a sigh, 'I can but implore thee, my poor Balthazar, on my bended knees, to keep close to thy vocation. Divide thy days betwixt duty and devotion.—Grow not an idle wassailer like the rest, nor clap hands with chance companions;—above all, range not beyond the precincts of the palace. There are those on the watch to do thee evil, who, for dear life's sake, would not adventure within the purlieus of St. Ildefonso"

"The authority of the king's messenger put a close to her extraordinary apostrophe; and, great as was my amazement at the good woman's mysterious vehemence, my attention was soon diverted by the novelty of the scenes that presented themselves, after hurrying from her presence.—My early experience was comprised within a walk of the farm—my experience of the last five years within the still narrower compass of a high-walled garden; and the rapture of my soul, in gazing once more upon the expanded face of Nature, is scarcely to be described in words. The royal messenger,—a man accustomed to sit in saddle three hundred days of the year,—laughed outright at my ecstasy on viewing the most familiar objects;—a willow overhanging a brook, a tree engarlanded with ivy, a bank overgrown with wild flowers!

"'How will it be with thee, youngster,' cried he, 'when thou beholdest the majestic walls of St. Ildefonso?'

"But the majestic walls of St. Ildefonso said nothing to my soul. The scene was but an enlarged portraiture of what I had left behind at Sancta Benedicta; and there, as at the convent, I was doomed to yearn after green fields verdant forests, and all the cheerfulness of sylvan freedom.

"Such satisfaction, however, as courtly advancement could bestow, was lavished on me, even to prodigality. Without any announcement of my arrival, the prince was pleased to detect the cunning of my hand in the very first collation served up to the royal table after my instalment; and to signify his approval, by requiring that my services should be dedicated to his sole delectation. Overawed, in spite of myself, by the mysterious denunciations of my poor

foster-mother, I had already determined to confine myself exclusively to the discharge of my duties; and, my efforts thus highly appreciated, I applied all the force of my ingenuity to the invention of new dainties for the royal palate. Every day, so long as the summer fruits hung ripe on the bough, I strove to enhance their flavour by my confections; and, on winter days, when they hung there no longer, I recalled them to the memory of Don Philip by some saccharine infusion. Heaven knows, the unhappy prince had need of syrups and confects to sweeten his imagination; beset as he was with grand inquisitors, chirurgeons, generals, admirals, and all the unholy army of martyr-makers, that surrounds the throne of a bigot prince. From my poor chamber, adjoining the roof of St. Ildefonso, and commanding at least a view of the open country, I truly pitied him;—he, whose prospects were so bounded—he, who seemed to build his hopes of heaven on rendering earth a hell to his fellow-men.

"Albeit I strictly adhered to the counsels of Dolores, and, devoted to my daily duties, never attempted to sally forth from the palace-gates; at odd moments, when my work was done, and the court engaged in attendance on the royal table or mass, I managed to glide out; and, on pretence of seeking fresh annis or coriander for my comfits, obtain a view, through the gilded latices of the pleasure-gardens, of the court ladies, parading in their robes of satin and brocade, to feed the peacocks that clustered round the marble fountains, or the gay Indian carp that glittered in the limpid waters below. One or other of the younger dames was usually loitering, gittern or lute in hand, beneath the dark shadows of the cedars or broad-leaved catalpa trees, shedding a melancholy charm about the place; and at such times, monotonous as was my daily routine of life, I felt that there was joy in being an inmate of St. Ildefonso. It was only when a procession of inquisitors reached the palace with tidings of some grievous arrest or horrible *auto-da-fe*, destroying the peace of families and causing my blood to freeze at the recital, that I sometimes repined at having to live and die the household servant of Philip of Spain.

"Among the happier privileges of my vocation, was that of taking my turn in the daily distribution of the provisions remaining after the meals of the royal household. Every

morning after the ringing of the Angelus, the poor were regaled in one of the minor courts of the palace; and the constant accession of pretendants to a share in the dole, afforded sufficient proof how highly it was valued by the humble population of the environs. Pilgrims and mendicants thronged to the gate,—infirm and aged persons, who could not dig, and to beg were ashamed; while others of better degree seemed to find especial pleasure in feeding on the crumbs that fell from a king's table.

"Among the latter, about a twelvemonth after my admission into the royal establishment, I began to notice a female of lofty stature, attired in a mourning habit; who appeared to have seen better days, and to whom I was careful to assign a liberal portion of the spoil. Her face I was unable to discern, so closely was it concealed in the loose cape of her sable dress. Her deportment was that of a person infirm from sickness, rather than advanced in years; and, one morning, when she advanced to receive a basket of bread and fruit which I had set aside for her, I ventured to add an inquiry, whether or not she was in such bodily need as to accept of—I was about to add, such alms as a menial may offer, when, suddenly raising her head so as to look me directly in the face, she deprived me of all power to complete my inquiry. I felt sinking into nothing under the scrutiny of her dark and piercing eyes!—

"'Is there aught, signora, in which I can do you service or pleasure?' was my amended inquiry; and, unconsciously, I uttered the words with the reverence due to a queen.

"For a moment, the stranger remained silent—her fearful glance still riveted upon my face.

"'Meet me this evening, at dusk, at the western extremity of the avenue of catalpas!'—said she, in a low concentrated voice.

"'The gardens of St. Ildefonso are closed at that hour, saving for those connected with the Court,' I faltered in reply,—not daring to say, in plain terms, the gates of the royal gardens unclose not for mendicants.

"'No matter,—I shall be there,' replied the stranger; and, folding around her more closely the loose cap of serge which replaced the basquina of a more prosperous class, she turned an angle of the court, and disappeared.

"And now, nothing could exceed my perturbation. A year within the precincts of a Court had initiated me tolerably well into the tender mysteries of love passages and assignations. But the age and deportment of my new acquaintance repressed all inclination to hope that her business with me was of a tender nature. She might come, however, as the emissary of others; and, though still secretly in awe of one who seemed born for the old Castilian fashion of wearing a dagger in her garter, I was true to my appointment.

"A dark figure awaited me under the third catalpa tree.

"'Balthazar!' exclaimed the voice of the stranger, in a scarcely-articulate gasp of delighted surprise, 'art thou come indeed?'—

"'Thou hadst my word signora,' replied I. Then, fearing that, although the gardens were nearly deserted, our interview might attract attention, I took her by the hand; and, leading her through the dusk, into the deep recesses of a cypress grove, placed her on one of its most secluded seats.

"'Your pleasure, signora?'—said I, in a low voice. But no answer was vouchsafed save only broken sobs. 'Your pleasure, signora?' I again repeated, fearing that I was to be made the dupe of a scene of pretended emotion; when, lo! instead of replying, the stranger flung her arms passionately round me, and strained me passionately to her bosom. My first impulse was to extricate myself from these unsought embraces.

"'Balthazar!' faltered the weeping woman, 'canst thou not discriminate between the caresses of a wanton and of a mother? Boy, boy!—the bosom to which thou art pressed in that which cherished thine infancy! My son—my own—my only! O, that thus, by stealth, and in shadows of death, we should be fated to meet again!'

"Great as was my amazement at this outburst of tenderness, the forewarnings of my good Dolores forbad me to give way to the impulses of tenderness wakening in my heart.

"'And how am I to determine the truth of all this?' said I, labouring to repress my emotion.

"'Doth not the intensity of an agonized mother's voice bring conviction with it?'—she replied, relaxing her em-

brace. 'Doth Nature whisper nothing to thy soul?—Submit thee, then, at least, to the testimony of vulgar evidence. I adjure thee, Balthazar Sanchez, by the home and guardians of thine infancy, by yonder farm on the Manzanares' side, by Pepito and Dolores thy foster-parents, by the convent of Sancta Benedicta, by——'

"'All these things may have been reported to thee by others,' said I, still mistrustful.

"'By the stain, then, wherewith, in the hour of birth, thy right arm above the wrist was disfigured, I challenge thee, as my offspring, and claim of thee the honor and homage of a son!'—said the stranger, in stern displeasure; and, this time, my answer consisted in dropping on my knees at her feet! But though thus tacitly recognising her claim, no yearning of the affections impelled me to lavish upon her the caresses of a child. I was awe-struck, over-powered, but not softened by the discovery that I was no longer an orphan. Nature seemed to forewarn me that there were humiliating secrets in store for me; and that I was already encompassed by the snares announced by Dolores.

"I was not long left in suspense. My mother, (or let me at once assign to her the name by which she at length announced herself) the Signora Rachaëla Sanchez, aware that the moments of our interview were numbered, suffered me not to waste my time in interrogation.

"'Thou wouldst doubtless know, Balthazar,' said she, enfolding her arms around me as I sat beside her on the marble bench, 'to what end I have thus strangely prolonged my separation from the child of my flesh? The moon hath not yet revolved, my son, upon my sojourn in Spain! I come to thee, after an exile in foreign lands; after fifteen years of toil and privation, under the scorching suns of Africa; and if the coldness with which thou hast welcomed me arise from the fears inspired by my mendicant's habit, arise and be of good cheer. I am rich, Balthazar. Though driven into banishment, a worse than beggar, the God of my fathers hath prospered me; and I return to my native country (albeit in secret, and under peril of the laws,) opulent enough to bribe, if not the clemency of the King, at least the merey of the executioner!'

"'The executioner?'—faltered I; the secret misgiv-

ings suggested by the Israelitish name of Rachaela, gradually increasing.

"'Hath the woman Dolores so far fallen from her pledge, as to keep thee ignorant of the misfortunes of thy parents, that thou art thus astounded?' cried my mysterious mother in a low hoarse voice. 'Not content with defiling thy young life by contact with a Christian congregation——'

"A cry of horror, bursting from the very depth of my soul, interrupted her disclosures. 'Speak, speak!' I exclaimed, trembling with apprehension. '*Who* am I—and *what* art *thou*,—who thus overcomest my mind with terrors?'

"'Thou art the circumcised child of persecuted parents, pertaining to the people elect of God,' replied Rachaela, with haughty defiance; and no sooner had the fearful secret escaped her lips, that in lieu of renewing my intreaties for farther information, I placed my hands upon her lips, imploring her to forbear.

"'Ay!' cried she, with bitterness, having at length wrested away my hand—'like the rest, poor miserable poltroon, thou shrinkest from her on whose head a price is set by the minions of the law! Thou wouldst even deny, I doubt not, thy persecuted creed!'

"'*My* creed?—It is none of mine!'—I exclaimed, with indignation. 'The very name of Jew is loathsome in my ears!—To the God of Christians was I taught to bend my knees. Among Christians have I abided—among Christians will I still abide. Unless thou art some messenger of Satan sent to work the perdition of my soul, away with thee at once, lest I be tempted——'

"'*To what?*'—interrupted Rachaela; 'to surrender me into the hands of the blood-seeking Inquisition, or of the stoney-hearted Prince, their master and thine?—*Do it!*—Summon the guard! Resign to their tender mercies the mother who bore thee; that they may butcher her, even as they did thy father, the husband of her youth, as a sport for the populace of Madrid!'

"Unconsciously I approached, and took her hand.

"'Was it not a pleasant recreation for them!' continued Rachaela, in an appaling whisper. 'An *auto-da-fe!*—The Inquisition, with its banners, and torches, and fiend-like fa-

miliars!—The well-piled faggots, the resin, the tar-barrel,—to torture, both in the flesh and the spirit, the last moments of poor Caspar Sanchez, the mildest, truest, kindest, of all the sons of his tribe! Casper, who never wronged a fellow-creature of a doit, nor injured a hair of mortal head? But he was a Jew—a proscribed Jew!—Driven by royal edict from the fertile fields of Spain, he had presumed to return (even as I have now returned) by stealth and in disguise; in order that his first-born child might see the light beneath the same roof where he had first beheld it. And, lo! the Christian murderers, whose creed professes pardon and meekness and peace, detected us in the worship of the God of Israel, and plunged him into the dungeons of the Hermandad! Then it was that, escaping in the darkness of the night, my infant in my arms, I preserved *thy* life, Balthazar, by entrusting thee to the honest couple whom the humanity of thy poor father had, in his better days, preserved from ruin. Even fallen as we were, Pepito and Dolores swore to become parents to the orphan child of Caspar Sanchez.'

"'And nobly fulfilled their undertaking,' said I, firmly.

"'"Tis false!' cried my mother. 'In accepting, for thy behoof, the small sum I had been able to bear away, they solemnly undertook to use no efforts to detach thee from thy father's faith.'

"'Nor did they. No word of religious instruction did I ever receive from their lips. It was only when, with coming years, they saw the turbulent spirit of the circumcised boy abandoned to their charge, expose him to danger of detection, that they placed me in the convent of Sanata Benedicta, and thus wrought the good work of my salvation.'

"'And of my revenge!' added my mother, in a low concentrated voice. 'Balthazar little dreamed those poor, bigoted, Castilian boors to how great a deed they were devoting their nursling! I have told thee that, to save thy life, I fled before the enemies of thy father. To avenge his death have I borne thenceforward the burden of existence. To thy hand, boy, the deed of retribution is decreed. In the Word of the God of Israel is it written—'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life!' and, lo! a royal one is assigned to repay the death of my murdered Caspar!

—Philip of Spain, the blood-thirstiest of her blood-thirsty princes, the favoring and favored son of the Holy Hermandad, must die by thy hand!'"

The gradually increasing emotion with which the venerable Spaniard had been pursuing his narrative, now thoroughly overcame him. Reclining breathless in his chair, he wrung his hands in utter agony; till the notary, after much soothing expostulation, entreated him to pass briefly over such passages of his history as were too afflicting to his soul.

"Be it so!"—murmured the old gentleman, when at length he regained the power of utterance. "Let it suffice thee, in a few fearful words, that, at that first interview and many succeeding ones, the implacable widow of Caspar Sanchez left no argument unattempted to prove that I owed it as a sacred duty to the memory of my father to offer up in attonement the life of Don Philip! The facilities afforded by my confidential post rendered the horrible deed only too easy of accomplishment. Furnished by my mother with the slow but subtle poisons of the East, I had only to decree the death of the Prince of Asturias, escape with Rachaela to the coast ere the effects of the poison were manifest, and, hastily embarking, betake myself to the land of my forefathers;—and glowing, indeed, were the terms in which Rachaela described to my bewildered senses the joys of an Oriental clime!—

"Fearful,—oh, fearful was my temptation!—Not that for a moment I inclined towards the commission of so great a crime; but, on discovering my abhorrence, my mother astuciously addressed her endeavors to obtain an influence over my affections,—pretending to listen to the arguments with which I endeavored to convert her to the religion of peace;—while, ever and anon, artfully reverting to the virtues, the sufferings, the frightful end of my father. Then, when satisfied of having roused in my bosom the dormant filial instincts so potent in all human hearts, she failed not to threaten, in case of my persisting in my resistance, to give herself up to the Holy Tribunal, and suffer death as a Jewess, before the face of God and of her son!

"Perplexed,—bewildered,—at one moment on the point of myself accusing her as a regicide—the next, almost disposed to become an assassin rather than endanger the life

of the author of my days,—how I longed for a renewal of those peaceful times of old on the banks of the Manzanares,—how I regretted the uneventful moments of the convent of Sancta Benedicta!—

"The perils in which I stood,—the intemperate revilings of Rachaela,—the revulsion of feeling produced by loving as a mother one whom I abhorred as a Jewess,—at length so irritated my blood, as to throw me into a raging fever. In the ravings of delirium, my secret transpired; and though at first treated as the delusion of insanity, the perpetually recurring terms of my adjurations, at length determined the royal confessor (who had been brought by my fellow servants to witness my excitement) to institute an investigation.

"Spare me the rest,—When, at the close of many months, I was restored to perfect consciousness, I found that the fires of the Inquisition had again been kindled, and that another victim was gone to rejoin the manes of Caspar Sanchez!

"My first impulse was to depart from a country watered with the blood of my kindred. But the contempt with which, on my recovery, I found myself treated by my comrades who affected to regard me as a recanted Jew, determined me to tarry for awhile, lest it should be supposed I fled from fear of their misusage. While thus irresolute, I was summoned into the presence of the comptroller of the royal household, who (after bidding me bless upon my knees, the clemency of Don Philip), acquainted me that the Prince, being about to embark for England to solemnize his union with Queen Mary, had decided that I should form one of the royal suite.

"'Don Philip condescends to consider,' he continued, 'that no stronger evidence of fidelity could be afforded than by your steady resistance to the evil suggestions of your mother. To reward, therefore, the stanchness of your faith as a Catholic, and loyalty as a subject, he doubles your salary as chief confectioner, and bids you prepare for immediate embarkation."

"Rebellion against such a mandate was impossible. But I was, in fact, overjoyed to be released from Spain. A residence at St. Ildefonso, darkened by such dreadful reminis-

cences, was insupportable. Madrid was worse. The church of the Dominicans, where sentence had been pronounced upon my parents, and the Plaza where their horrible destiny was accomplished, were alike hateful to my soul. The invisible hand of the Holy Hermandad seemed armed against my life.—Mysterious voices ever murmured in the air, prophesying evil; and whenever it was my chance to meet a procession of the order of St. Dominic, the blood seemed frozen in my veins!—

"Under such circumstances, Master Notary, judge how great was my relief to disembark upon the strand of Britain!—The land, as we sailed betwixt the wooded banks of the Southampton river, looked green and tranquil as a dove's nest, and, though the minds of the people were disposed against this Spanish alliance, desiring to behold their Queen wedded with a countryman of their own, yet was our reception and progress bright with overflowing hospitality.

"It needs not to enlarge upon the events that followed. The favor I enjoyed in the eyes of the Prince sufficed to recommend me to the grace of her Majesty,—who in her fulsome fondness for a bridegroom eleven years her junior, used to requite, with the most lavish prodigality, the trifling gifts offered as tokens of his respect. Among these, according to the custom of Spain, sweetmeats were a common offering; and, on occasion of his Highness presenting to her Majesty on her birth-day a comfit-box, richly encrusted with jewels, and filled with his favorite confection of candied pistachio nuts, Don Philip took occasion to relate the story of his faithful Balthazar, whose abilties he was pleased to estimate far beyond their desserts.

"'The youth must henceforward be especially attached to my household,' replied the Queen, at the close of her royal husband's narrative; and no small relief was it to my mind that, when Don Philip, weary of the thraldom of wedlock, affected to be recalled to Spain by business of state, I was allowed to remain behind, in the quiet verdant seclusion of Richmond. There, even there, did nature seem to take me once more to her bosom! In this sylvan retreat, the peace of other days came back to me. Amid the blending beauties of its woods and waters, I tried to lose the impression of my past afflictions.

"The sole embitterment of my life arose from the religious persecutions which soon filled the kingdom with tears and anguish. Though the temper and constitution of the country forbad the introduction of the Inquisition, as at one period meditated by the Queen, the intolerant spirit of Philip's congenial wife caused the flames of persecution to be kindled; and, in lieu of Pagans, and Jews, Christian now consigned his fellow-Christian to the stake!

"Against such a breach of divine law, my soul revolted, and in many a secret prayer did I commend myself to the Almighty, imploring him to soften the heart of the Queen, and so modify the belief of the people that the religion of Christ might become all in all, and faith, hope, and charity govern the institutions of the land.

"'Beware!' would oftentimes exclaim that prudent and tender soul, Mistress Alice Harkwell, who afterwards became my wife and household comforter—'beware lest these unorthodox sentiments be suspected. Thine opinions, Master Balthazar, savor of the faggot and tar-barrel. By my sooth! thou art already half a Protestant.'

"And so, true to her insinuation, on the death of the Queen, and the accession of the glorious Elizabeth, I became *wholly* a Protestant, and her spouse. It was not, as many inferred, the desire to retain my place at court which opened my ears to the arguments wherewith the chaplains of her Majesty labored to enlighten the darkness of her faithful servitors; but that from the Popish cause there emanated an odor of human blood, too grievously reminding me of the fate of my parents! Persecution and intolerance were the handmaidens of the Roman Church;—and, somehow or other, the Jewish blood within me seemed to curdle in my veins at the very sight of the uplifted Host.

"At the Queen's coronation, Master Notary, trust me there was not a more devoted Protestant kneeling in the aisles, than he by whose skill was compounded the masterpiece of confectionery that glittered at the banquet as chief decoration of the royal table. Your countrymen came forthwith flocking to the palace, desiring to be instructed in my art. Scholars had I, almost beyond my power of reckoning; and it hath been pretty generally affirmed that to poor Balthazar Sanchez, England is indebted for the introduction of the art

of comfit-making. Though now and then a jealous rival presumed to whisper of me as the 'Spanish Jew,' none dared to gainsay the award when, in my old age, the Queen's gracious Majesty permitted me to retire from Court for the enjoyment of my means, retaining to the end of my days the title of honor of her royal confectioner."

"Nor needs there a better proof, Master Sanchez, of the good renown wherewith you have borne it," interrupted old Trackit, "than that the grandniece of your late spouse (who, failing issue of your body, you adopted as heir) should have been sought in marriage by no less worthy a gentleman than Sir Carnaby Savile."

"A fig for Sir Carnaby Savile"'—cried Sanchez, filling his glass from the flagon of dry Malaga standing on the table beside him. "Sir Carnaby would have mated with my mother, Rachaela, or any maiden or matron of her tribe, upon sufficient incitement of gold. No more!—Enough of my heir-at-law and of is virtues.—They are not of such weight with me as to obstruct my long-meditated purpose of giving to the poor a third portion of substance; and so pleading to the Lord's mercy for the errors of my fathers, and my own levity, if levity there be, in changing the form of my devotions. Albeit the worldly blessings wherewith the Almighty hath blessed me, may be esteemed tokens of divine forgiveness, there are times when my soul hath been exceeding sorrowful with perplexity betwixt the Jewish creed to which I was born, the Catholic faith in which I was nurtured, and the Protestant church to which I now adhere.

"If I have sinned, however, in this thing, it hath been with good intent, and soon may the blessings of the poor confirm the promises of grace to the dying moments of THE QUEEN'S COMFIT-MAKER."*

* Balthazar Zanca, or Sanchez, who came to this country in the train of Philip II, was the first royal confectioner attached to the English court. After being converted to Protestantism, he died in 1602, at his mansion at Tottenham Cross, having contributed to the cost of the brick cross erected by Dean Wood in 1600, in place of the wooden one then standing, and erected, at his sole expense, an almshouse for eight poor persons. The residence of Balthazar Sanchez, is now an inn, and the almshouses in question, remain in good preservation.

# THE YOUNG SOLDIER,

OR

## MILITARY DISCIPLINE.

BY "THE OLD BACHELOR IN PARIS."

THE most enthusiastic panegyrist of the discipline and subordination of the British army must, if a man of Christian sympathies, connect such painful associations with the words, "military punishment," that, if accidentally pronounced in his hearing in the midst of a brilliant field-day or royal review, the striking scene forfeits half its charm in his eyes. The "ha! ha!" of the trumpet breathes discordantly in his ears; and the symmetrical lines of apparently mechanical figures present only a mass of deformity and confusion.

It is not so in France. There is nothing revolting to the finer feelings of humanity in the process by which the country clod is shaped into the trimly, agile, active soldier. In admiring the soldier-like array of a regiment on parade or manœuvering in the field, we feel that we are looking upon *men*, and men upon whom the frailties of mortal nature will never draw down the chastisement of dogs.

Among the numerous spectacles that recreate the eye of a stranger in Paris, is one that fills the mind of every Englishman with painful reflections—*i. e.*, a military degradation.

"Come with me to the Place Vendome," cried I, the other day, to a country cousin of mine, lately on a visit to the French metropolis (a somewhat snivelling philanthropist, who arrived here, charged with a catalogue of eleven hundred questions upon the origin of truth, much after the fashion of the English philosopher, described in St. Pierre's 'Indian Cottage'). "I have something interesting to show you."

"I thank you," he replied. "I have seen quite as much as I desire of the bronze column."

"You were blind else!" cried I, knowing that he had been passing and repassing it hourly for ten days previously.

"And as to mounting to the top," he resumed, "I should as soon think of climbing the chimney of a steam-engine!"

"Or I either!" was my reply; "more particularly since, during your sojourn here, you have forced me to survey the city from the pinnacle of the temple of Notre Dame, and the wing of the telegraph at Montmartre, in spite of my declarations of preferring any other mode of rising in the world."

"But you are dragging me all this time towards the Place Vendome," quoth my cousin Peter, as we pushed onwards in a throng, from which cries of—"*Allons, allons!—on degrade! on degrade!*" arose in all directions.

"Because I want you to witness a curious exhibition."

"Ay, ay? In the department of natural history, or of the fine arts?"—

"In the simple history of human nature," was my rejoinder; and methought I heard a contemptuous whistle issue from beneath my cousin Peter's amber spectacles. "I want you to see a military punishment."

"A military punishment!—God's life, sir! for what do you take me?—A man of *my* sensibility become an eye-witness of so disgusting an incident?" cried he (with a countenance such as used to be worn by hundreds of auditors of Sir Francis Burdett's humanity-harangues of former times, graphically describing, previous to a Westminster election, the horrors of flogging in the British army).

"Your sensibility is in no manner of danger," said I, quietly resuming my hold of his arm, which the start of my cousin Peter had dislodged. "For the first time in your

life, you are about to see a soldier punished like a Christian, rather than like a brute."

At that moment we entered the Place Vendome; that sober, solid, architectural monument which, replete as it is with historical associations, has undergone no defeatures from the hand of time or the hand of taste, from the epoch when the Scotch adventurer, Law, inhabited one of the most splendid hotels, obtained at the cost of hundreds of thousands of French victims, to the present hour.

Though the bold and salient masks of granite, which still smile complacently, or frown majestically over the basement stories of its noble habitations, are the same which smiled or frowned upon the tripping marquises or red-heeled abbes of the reign of Louis XV,—upon the carts conveying the same to execution after the deposition of Louis XVI,—upon the massacres of two revolutions,—upon the military ovations of the empire, and the puppet-show processions arising from the restoration of the bi-furcal line of Bourbon, their comely faces remain unwrinkled by the lapse of the couple of centuries that have played such fantastic tricks with the numerous generations of human visages succeeding to their original contemporaries.

On the day in question, an autumnal sun was shining out brilliantly on the public offices,—the *Quartier General*, the *Chancellerie*, and others, which occupy so large a portion of the old octagon; distinguished from the *hotels garnis*, their neighbours, only by the discoloured tri-coloured flags pendent over their several *portes cocheres*;—and on the present occasion, by the fact that, while the windows of the latter were crowded, from *entresol* to *mansarde*, with curious spectators of all nations, but especially with British, those of the governmental hotels were empty; the inhabitants (as of all public offices all over the world), being scrupulously engaged in the discharge of their public duties.

"A splendid trophy, certainly!" quoth my cousin Peter, glancing, as well as the intensity of sunlight would allow, from the base to the summit of the noble column—(which, though familiar with it for the last six years, I never survey without admiration.) "Still, I can't make up my mind to the statue of Napoleon! 'Tis vulgar, sir, immensely vulgar, and altogether unworthy the memory of the defunct Emperor of the most polite nation in Europe."

"No doubt you would have preferred a Winged Victory, or a Fame blowing her trumpet on a china orange, as on the roof of the office of the 'Morning Post!'"—cried I, with indignation; "or Napoleon himself, perhaps, in his Dalmatic robes of estate, looking like a play-actor in a Roman cuirass and helmet, like the effigy of General Hollis in Westminster Abbey!"

"I don't say but I might," replied Peter, coolly.

"Instead of which, you behold one of the greatest men of the greatest era 'in his habit as he lived' to regenerate the fallen kingdom of France! But, stay!—I may spare myself a word of rhetoric. Think you that yonder group of peasants, to whom the timber-toed Invalid who accompanies them,—some veteran uncle or grandsire,—is pointing out, with tears in his eyes, the figure of his old master,—his *camarade*,—his *petit caporal*,—would have experienced the feelings sparkling now in their looks at sight of the familiar 'Nap,' in his *redingote grise*,—if the column of the *grande armee* had been surmounted by a Winged Victory, resembling those of the gilt candelabra on an inn chimneyspiece; or even a man in an imperial robe, looking like Talma in a tragedy? But, hark!"

At that moment, the gay strains of a military band were borne towards us! becoming gradually clearer and clearer, and more and more inspiring, till we caught sight of a gallant company of infantry marching in double quick time into the square; saluting the *Quartier General* as it passed with a salutation that seemed addressed rather to the great man looking complacently down upon them from the sunny sumit of the column.

Quick as thought, troop now succeeded troop; sappers and miners, hussars, lancers, cuirassiers, dragoons light and heavy, companies, in short, from every regiment composing the garrison of Paris, each in its best array, pipeclayed and burnished, bright and shining, to form a hollow oblong square, lining the whole of the southeastern moiety of the Place Vendome; at the head of which was stationed the fine brass band, whose exciting strains were to impart a stirring effect to the solemnity of the day. In the centre of the square (the men having taken up their ground in time), the officers began to form into groups; while *beyond* the

*cordon* of vagabonds, a collection of intermingled carriages, cabriolets, carts, drays, trucks, and water-tons,—such as usually beset the outskirts of an English race-course or review.

The scene was a striking one. Both military and civilians grew eager for the appearance of the delinquents, to witness whose degredation from their position in the French army, they were assembled; and, though the loungers in the windows above (from the fair young English children, clapping their little hands for glee, at the *mansarde* of the Hotel de Londres, to the stout old Indian General, surveying the motley scene from his hospitable residence opposite,) might admire the discipline of the troops, or point to the glittering arms or white aprons, and tremendous beards of the pioneers, the crowd itself seemed strictly absorbed by the fate of the forth coming prisoners.

At length there glided into the centre of the square,—amid groups of well-padded generals, with snow-white mustachios, and well-bronzed colonels, with iron-grey,—two spruce figures—"gentlemen in black"—with white cravats and varnished boots; *i. e.*, the judge-advocate and his clerk, appointed to read to the prisoners their sentence; and soon afterwards, a sudden rush of the mob (especially of its more ragged portion) towards the *Quartier General*, announced that the point of interest lay in that direction.

"Whither are those blackguards running?"—quoth my cousin Peter, revolving on his heel towards the commandant's residence, as if his boot contained a pivot.

"To look at blackguards greater than themselves!" I repiled. "Did you not see the prisoners arrive just now at head-quarters, in a *panier a salade!*"

"In a salad basket?"—cried Peter, aghast, much in Mrs. Siddons's tone of surprise on learning that a mercantile gentleman of her acquaintance had died in his *bureau.* "How gat they there, I marvel?"—

"A *panier a salade,*" said I, didactically (with a view to his future "Notes of a Traveller,") "is the species of hermetically-sealed police-van, in which criminals are conveyed in France to the place of execution, and refractory soldiers to the scene of degredation. Look!—The fellows are coming forth from the *porte-cochere*!—There are two of

them,in the centre of the file of soldiers with loaded muskets; to make way for which, the mob falls back on either side,like the waves of the Red Sea for the passage of the Israelites. See how the *gamins,* in their ragged *blouses,* hurry to keep up with them, in hopes of catching a glimpse of their sinful or sorrowful countenances!"

We were now in the thick of the throng, pushing and elbowing among the rest, with the due allowance of imprecations bestowed upon each fresh effort we made to advance towards the column; immediately fronting which, were stationed the general and his etat major before whom the prisoners were to be marched for the hearing of their sentence. Hitherto, I had wasted no attention on the individuals whose elbows punched my ribs, or whose oaths invaded my ears, conceiving them to belong to the vulgar herd of profane swearers and punchers. But when, on my cousin Peter's ejaculation of joy at catching sight of the prisoners, one deep sigh—a sigh almost amounting to a gasp—burst from the bosom of a pale, sickly, young peasant girl, who was leaning on the arm of a decrepit woman by my side, I could not help fearing that they might be more than commonly interested in the fate of the delinquents, and I consequently moderated my observations. I even contrived to obtain for them, by pushing aside a great lubberly English schoolboy who stood gnawing a hunch of *gateau de Nanterre* to my right, a peep into the square similar to the one enjoyed sideways by myself and Peter.

A roll of drums now startled us to look again towards the base of the column; in front of which, midway between the two lines of soldiers, stood two miserable-looking beings, clad in an ignominious prison-uniform, the one of grey the other of black cloth, with caps to match, and wooden shoes; the long cloak-shaped capote hanging so as to conceal their handcuffed wrists, and creating a sort of hapless helplessness, strangely contrasted with the smart and trim vivacity of their former comrades. Mounting guard behind them, stood a file of armed light infantry men; on one side the general-commandant; and, facing them, the spruce judge-advocate, holding an open paper in his hand.

Placed at too great a distance to distinguish by whom the word of command was given, I saw the two prisoners sud-

denly drop on their knees to listen to the bitter sentence of the law. The sinner in grey, whose criminality appeared to be a shade less dark than that of the sinner in black, bent down *his* head as he knelt, and, as far as I could judge by his movements tears were falling from his eyes; but the fellow in black, with unequaled audacity, laughed outright, and kept up a series of buffooneries, as if attempting to excite the risibility of the spectators.

"What are they doing?" whispered Peter, whose spectacles were at fault.

"Reciting to the prisoners the sentence of the their court-martial, as confirmed by the council of war, previous to undergoing a certain term of imprisonment. Already, as you perceive, the men have been stript of their military uniforms. They are now about to be degraded in the sight of the garrison of Paris; and paraded along the line in their prison clothes, handcuffed and dragging after them each a cannon ball fastened by a chain round their middle. Expelled the service, they must take leave, as it were, of their comrades, under these humiliating degradations."

"The impudent rascal in black seems as bold as brass!" cried Peter. "See! he has risen from his knees, and they are blindfolding him, while the *boulet* is being fastened on! Parade him along the line? Why the fellow won't stir an inch!"

"Look again!" cried I. And Peter had the satisfaction of seeing him impelled onwards smartly, by a soldier holding him by the arm on either side; and soon the clanking of his chain and the rumbling of the *boulet* against the stones as it dragged after him, asserted that he was in rapid motion. At that moment, not a syllable was breathed along the ranks. "Attention" was the word,—and the word itself was audible from one end of the Place Vendome to the other, distinct as the striking of a bell.

Once and again the black figure, with blindfolded eyes, shuffled along in its *sabots*; halting at length before the column, there to abide during the punishment of his companion. But the moment the poor lad in grey was harnessed with his *boulet*, a murmer of commiseration arose among the throng. He was so young! his countenance was so downcast! and, though the color and fashion of his prison-gar-

ment announced that *his* transgression was of a very different nature from that of his companion, entailing only three months' detention in a military prison instead of the hulks awaiting the criminal in black (who was under sentence for theft, with attempt to murder the corporal by whom he was taken into custody,) the crowd, and more especially the female part of it, seemed of opinion that he was too severely punished.

Proud, even in his broken-heartedness, he evidently scorned to be dragged along like a malefactor; for, though still retaining his downcast countenance, so that his swollen eyelids were scarcely discernible, he walked firm and erect; and the *boulet* moved steadily at his heels, instead of being jerked from stone to stone, as by the movements of his refractory fellow-prisoner. Grey mantle was back again at the column, in half the time the felon had accomplished his ignominious task.

And now, another prolonged roll of the drums announced that a portion of the solemnity of the day was at an end. The *boulets* were taken off; and while the two prisoners, closely flanked and strongly guarded, were posted immediately in front of the column, so as to form a prominent mark, the band struck up once more its inspiriting strains, and marched past them in quick time; followed in succession by the whole complement of troops assembled, successively broken up into companies. *That* was the most impressive moment! the two wretched-looking beings standing there in their infamy, to listen to the cheering measures to which they had so often marched in the performance of their duty, and beholding their comrades, in all the bright array of discipline, proceed cheerily along, while *they* stood shivering in their sabots, not daring to cast a look in their faces!—Sunk as they were, they had still to bear a heavier penalty of their fault!

"Just so can one conceive Lucifer, after his fall, contemplating the upward flight of legions of free and happy angels!"—quoth Peter, who was beginning to snivel. "Alas! poor fellows!—brave soldiers, perhaps, as any here, yet about to be debarred the blessed light of Heaven, and the free use of their limbs. This sunshine is the last that will warm them for months; and, instead of yonder glad-

some music, the death-like silence of prison solitude is decreed them !"—

Cousin Peter was prosing on, or rather poeticising, to his heart's content, when his thin small voice was overpowered by a general shouting from the populace in our vicinity for "*La marchande! La marchande!*" meaning one of those itinerant venders of filtered water calling itself iced water), a dozen of which were scattered along the outskirts of the throng, with their gay fountains and plated goblets; as they invariably are in Paris, wherever two or three hundred are gathered together. "A cup of water!" was loudly called for. Somebody had fainted.

I now remembered with compunction that, intent upon exhibiting to my cousin Peter the minutiæ of a ceremonial so interesting to every friend of humanity, I had forgotten to take care, or even heed, of the two poor women at one time stationed by my side; and now that the crowd had changed its form to yield to the movements of the military (who were wheeling off in companies, and taking up their position on the opposite side of the square, till the prisoners should have marched back again into the general's quarters, and they were at liberty to march themselves back to their own), they were nowhere to be seen. My mind misgave me that it was for one of them water was required. But, as is usual in case of a swoon, the mob pressed round the fainting person to shut out the fresh air with such assiduous humanity as to intercept all means of satisfying my curiosity.

"Look, look!" cried Peter, far more interested in the aspect of the military prisoners than in the sprinkling of a young lady's face with filtered water, "how daring the aspect of that hardened ruffian, how humbled the looks of his companion! There is plenty of room. We can advance nearer to them now."

And the staid prim old bachelor was actually trotted off towards the column, in the wake of a tribe of *gamins* of the lowest description, who were cheering the impudent offender with cries worthy of the intellect of their class—of "*Vive la Marsellais!*"

As we drew towards the column, a ragged hat half full of *gros sous*, and smelling of halfpence and humanity enough to poison a lord, was tendered to us for our subscription for the

prisoners—such being the charitable custom of the mob, in favour of one of their order brought to condign punishment.

After we had "taken out twopence and given them" to the hat-bearer, we were suffered to proceed. But on arriving within view of the twain, there was something so revolting in the dare-devil look of the one, something so touching in the humbled despondency of the other, that I was fain to retreat. I could as soon have looked upon the mangled back of an English soldier writhing under the lash, as upon the meek offender!

"What was the younger soldier's fault?" said I, having contrived to make my way to the iron railing of the column, so as to accost that man of renown, that Malvolio in a worsted epaulet, Corporal Diakon, *alias* the "*Capitaine de la Colonne*," the non-commissioned officer invested by government with the charge of the column.

"*Un delit plusque que capital!* a breach of military discipline," growled the stanch soldier (with whom, *Deo volente*, I mean to make the British public better acquainted.)

"Desertion?" persisted I, remembering the penalty entailed in England by this heinous transgression.

But even Corporal Diakon's sonorous voice was at that moment rendered inaudible by a piercing shriek from some woman attempting to press her way through the crowd towards the prisoners, ere they were marched off to prison.

"Let me pass, let me pass, or I may never see his face again!" cried the poor old woman, my recent neighbour, apparently roused from her depression to attempt some desperate effort; and still drenched with the water which kind but officious Samaritans had showered on her young companion, as she lay insensible. "Let me pass, if you have the hearts of Christians!"

The pitying throng ceded to her struggles, and made way for her to approach the prisoner. But, alas! the file of soldiers with their loaded muskets were stationed there expressly to prevent all intercourse between the criminals and the crowd.

"Only one word with Victor, *only* one!" gasped the agonized old creature, still pressing onwards.

"'Tis the mother of the young girl who has fainted, the *bonne aime*, no doubt, of one of the prisoners," murmured the *gamins* who stood near me.

"At least let me look upon his face!"—faltered the woman, wringing her hands.

"*Arriere!*" was all the answer of the soldiers, stiff as ramrods, and strengthened in stanchness of subordination by witnessing the solemnity of the morning.

"Victor, Victor!"—screamed the despairing woman, on finding herself thus repulsed; while murmurs of "Shame, shame!" began to arise among the ragged regiment of *gamins*.

"Just then I caught sight of the face of the two prisoners, whom the lower stature of the poor woman excluded from her view; and there was no difficulty in deciding to which of them her visit was addressed. Her voice, her piteous exclamations, had reached their ears; and the face of the grey man was instantly overspread by a vivid flush, which as quickly gave place to ashy paleness. From the moment his comrades had marched past as if bidding him adieu forever, he had fallen into a sort of sullen stupor. But *now* big tears gathered anew under his eyelids.

"Speak—speak,—you who are near to him!" she cried distractedly addressing a few, who, like myself, seemed to overtop the heads of the soldiers. "Tell him that his mother and sister have struggled up from Auvergne to see him. Tell him she is innocent—tell him Manon is innocent!—Say, that while he was incurring this dreadful sentence, by absenting himself without leave from his regiment to seek after his sister at the Count's chateau, she was safe with her father at Riom.—She is ill—very ill!—Bid him send her his forgiveness. Say that his old mother pledges her soul for the innocence of her poor caluminated girl!—O sirs! speak to Victor!—See! they are marching off and he has not heard me! He will never know the truth. They are bearing him to prison, and he will be tormented night and day by the thoughts of his sister's shame. Will no one follow him? Will no one speak to him? Will no one---*no one*---pity me and help me?"

"*Par ici, ma bonne!* Come back to the young woman!" panted a breathless *gamin*, plucking her by the sleeve.

"Quick, quick! the girl is dying!" shouted a second, dragging her along.

"Let the poor soul alone," interposed a third, in a lower voice; "I tell you it is too late. She is dead."

At that moment, the gay military band, breathing the strain of the "Cachucha" with all its brass, wheeled lightsomely past!

"And you told me that my sensibility had nothing to fear in witnessing this accursed scene!" sighed, or rather sobbed my cousin Peter, after we had assisted to guard the body of the soldier's sister from the trampling of the throng, until the arrival of the *commissaire de police* to draw out his *proces verbal.* "I vow I would not have to go through the spectacle of that old peasant woman's despair again to be made a fellow of the Royal Society!"

"You must not suppose such things of frequent occurrence here," said I,---scarcely able to articulate.

"I wonder," said Peter, stopping short, "whether any one was considerate enough to inform the poor lad that his sister was lying dead in the Place, and his mother half distracted by her side?"---

"Let us hope not!" replied I, with a heavy sigh. "The young soldier has had misery enough for to-day, in undergoing his sentence. I am even satisfied with my own portion, as a spectator of the course of MILITARY DISCIPLINE!"

# A LUCKY DOG.

BY "THE OLD BACHEROR IN PARIS."

My friend Leonard D'Egoville is one of the happiest rascals of my acquaintance; but there is a provoking self-satisfaction in the fellow's looks, which is apt to put the rest of the world out of humor with his prosperity. D'Egoville is always triumphant, ever exulting;—overpowering one with his selfish sense of enjoyment, and perpetual demands on one's admission of inferiority. Why not, for instance, allow me to eat my mutton cutlet in peace, without informing me that yesterday *he* dined on *chevreuil*? Why not let me enjoy my humble dish of larks, without boasting, with a punch in the ribs, that last night *he* supped on *beccaficos*? For my part, I can contentedly swallow my paltry pint of *Pouilly* under the acacia trees of the "*Vendanges de Bourgogne*," without insulting the *porteur d'eau* I see making wry faces at the nearest *guinguette* over his *vin de Surene*, by enlarging upon its delicate flavour; and, methinks, I have a right to expect similar forbearance on the part of the chucking M. D'Egoville, when he comes parading to me about *his* iced *St. Peray* or choice *Sauterne*. I am not more envious than my neighbours; yet I swear there are moments when it would be a relief to me to see my friend Leonard receive a box on the ear, in retribution of his exultations.

For several years past, D'Egoville has been in the enjoyment of a capital bachelor's apartment on the Boulevard des Capucines, and a charming villa at Montmorency; and I admit that he would be an ungrateful dog were he not to

thank Heaven, morning, evening, and at odd times between, for this auspicious ordering of his destinies.

But he has no right to tantalize a poor wretch like myself, by bragging of the coolness of his cellars, the marrow-like softness of his sofa-cushions, the richness of his furniture, or the smoothness of his *parquets*.

"This is a cheering sight," said I, on meeting him the other day at the exhibition of the arts and manufactures of France, now open in the Champs Elysees, "a most gratifying thing for Louis Philippe and the French nation, to perceive how vast a progress has been made during the last five years in the texture of their cloths, the growth of their wool, and the temper of their cutlery. The jury will find it a difficult task, I conceive, to award their medals and prizes among so many meritorious competitors."

"What the devil do *I* care for the jury, its medals or prizes?" exclaimed D'Egoville, with a self-complacent laugh. "*I* come here, my dear fellow, solely on my own errand. Happening to look yesterday at my banker's book, and to find the balance, as usual, on the right side, I instantly drew a checque for a few thousand francs, with the view of adding more comforts to my bachelor's hall yonder, at Montmorency. For a man who has a little money to throw away, this place is really a resource! One sees all the new inventions, all the last improvements, without the bore of driving from shop to shop, to be solicited to death; and after all, perhaps flummeried into the purchase of a service of plate or a boot-jack of last year's fashion. Look at this magnificent stained crystal from Alsace! I have just ordered myself a most exquisite little *cabaret* for my *eau sucree*, white embossed with garnet colour, for two hundred francs. I should have paid half as much again for some *rococo* machine or other of the same kind, had I contented myself with a glance at the Palais Royal. Again, yonder magnificent carpet of Sallandrouze's with the peacock waving his gorgeous tail as a centre piece, I have bought it for my drawing-room for two thousand francs, instead of closing for the quizzical Aubusson for which I was bargaining with my upholsterer; I am now on my road to the next gallery, to settle about some carved ebony consoles. I can't make up my mind exactly which I like best—those with or without the ivory inlaying."

"The difference of price between the two must be considerable," I inadvertently observed.

"Ay, ay—*that* is the point always uppermost in the thoughts of some people. Luckily, a thousand or two of francs more or less in the cost, signifies very little to *me!* All I have to consider is, which kind will harmonize best with the new Venetian hangings which Lesage is putting up in my saloon. And by the way, what think you of those mechanical beds yonder, with their reading-desk, lamp-stand, and table-service, appearing and disappearing by the touch of a spring? I have some thoughts of getting one against my first fit of the gout. Even in this hot weather it is pleasant enough to be waited upon, without being offended by the sight of one footmen's shining faces."

"Certainly, certainly," said I, striving to get away, and follow my own devices in the examination of the curious works of art and science abounding in the gallery.

"Why, where the deuce are you hurrying?" cried Leonard D'Egoville; "what can *you* want here?" he continued with a supercilious glance from my seedy coat to one of Aucoq's gorgeous dressing-cases of embossed gold.

"Not much, indeed!" replied I, forcing a laugh. But there is some consolation in examining and philosophizing upon yonder anatomical model of an unsophisticated man with its demonstration of veins and arteries, proving all the sons of Adam to be condemned to the same organization; in contradistinction to the various displays of finery, lace, embroidery, and brocade, which furnish the worldly distinction between my lord and his valet, between the Crœsus and the beggar!"

My irony was thrown away.

"Brocade? embroidery?" cried D'Egoville, catching at the only sounds comprehensible to him in my harangue; "where the devil are they? I have seen only those devoted to the service of the altar, which are being bought up in waggon-loads for the new churches. There is nothing worth speaking of in the way of embroidery that *I* am aware of."

"Not even the exquisite court-train and cushion marked with the initials of the young Queen of England?" cried I, with indignation.

"As I told you before, I am in search only of objects applicable to my own use. What are court-trains to *me?* But, by the way," continued Leonard (pointing to a stall we were passing, covered with troupets and perruques of every size, shape, sort, and shade, betwixt black, chinchilli, and hoary silver, the full-bottom and the astucious *tour de tete*), "even *you* might surely find things here adapted to your wants and pocket. See, my poor friend! cauls of very decent aspect for your bald crown, at ten francs a-piece!—And look beyond,—superb *rateliers* of teeth for three louis a-set, or half-a-crown by the single grinder!—Ears, too, in gold, silver, or caoutchouc, permanent or temporary, with acoustic tubes, affixable at pleasure. And, as I live, glass eyes of every hue, from sparkling black to sentimental blue. But you enjoy, I fancy, the use of both your eyes, eh?—your imperfect vision is merely the result of your time of life?—Well—no need to despair! Here is an optician who promises that, by the use of a pair of five-franc spectacles, you shall be able to read diamond editions by candle-light."

"There are also yonder crutches for the lame, iron bandages for the deformed, and even strait-waistcoats for the insane," cried I, enraged beyond my patience by his insolent egotism. "But I flatter myself I stand in need of neither; and am thankful to Heaven that I am able to admire the progress of human ingenuity, without reference to my personal wants or deficiencies."

"Why, by Jupiter, I do believe you are affronted!" cried D'Egoville. "My dear fellow, ten million of pardons! Perhaps I am a little too apt to overlook the raws and sores of other people! Yet I have certainly no reason to disparage those arising from—from a deficiency in the financial department," said he, afraid of again offending me. "Only a few years ago, I used to come here myself with wistful eyes and watering mouth, like the chimney-sweepers who thaw their noses in hard weather against the panes of the pastry-cook's shops. I did not then dare so much as lift my ambition to a cane and tassel, by way of equipage;—*I* who, this very season, have launched a couple of carriages and a *fourgon!*"

I was amazed. Though the bragging propensities of

Leonard D'Egoville ought to have forewarned me of the *parvenu*, his hardness of heart had caused me to set him down in my mind as one born and nurtured in the sunshine of prosperity. So little had he learned mercy, that I could not conceive he had ever suffered persecution.

"You look surprised," cried he, detecting my amazement. "Did I never confide to you the strange origin of my fortune? Let me see—when we first made our acquaintance crossing St. Bernard, four years ago—"

"You were, as now, in the enjoyment of wealth and independence," said I. "During the illness following the accident which then befel me,—*me*, a poor wayfarer,—you were lavish in your offers of assistance—"

"Pooh, pooh! I have heard enough of that—it was not of that we were talking,"—cried D'Egoville. "I was telling you, or wanting to tell you, how, from a poor devil in arrears for the rent of his fusty lodging in the Quartier Latin, I achieved my present position. The story is a long one, and would do me little honor in the ears of the idlers of the Exposition, should it chance to be overheard. Come down, therefore, with me to Montmorency,—my Pelham is at the door,—come down with me, I say to Montmorency, and dine and sleep; and you shall have the narrative of my chequered life, including a description of the memorable temple of Esculapius,—*l'hopital des chiens*,—which was the making of me."

"You kept a dog-hospital!" cried I, inexpressibly astonished.

"Not exactly," replied Leonard, more diverted, however, than indignant at the accusation. "Trust me, I had not wherewithal to entertain any establishment half so costly. But I see that your curiosity is excited. Let us be a going. I dine at six precisely,—ay, *precisely*, even to a friend."

"I am sorry I cannot accept your obliging invitation," said I, drawing up. "Although I lodge in a *cinquieme*, and the meal awaiting me is only my daily *soupe* and *bouilli*, the good woman who prepares it would be apt in her anxiety to go and interrogate the police, should her methodical master commit so strange a breach of routine as to

tarry from home for board and bed, without having duly apprized her."

"Stuff and nonsense! We will take the Rue Miromenil in our way out of town, instead of crossing through Les Thermes; and you may at once apprize your Megara, and snatch up a change of linen, in case you are tempted to remain with me to morrow," cried D'Egoville. "Come,come! we must not lose our time. A good *entree* waits for no man; and our *filets de caneton* will be spoiled, if you stand heming and ha-ing thus."

Though I did my utmost to evade the engagement, between threats, promises, and cajolements, Monsieur D'Egoville took such forcible possession of my mind and body, that we had reached St. Ouen before I was half reconciled to my inconsistency of purpose.

"How full of historical reminiscences are all the environs of Paris!"—cried D'Egoville, with a sentimental air, as we drove within view of the aristocratic parks of St. Ouen; "betwixt the great De Stael, Du Cayla, and Ternaux of Merino-sheep renown,—how many illustrious names connect themselves with the history of St. Ouen! But I forget—I have promised to talk to you of a person less illustrious—of my obscure self."

And as he spoke, he began to caress his crossed leg with an air of complacency, implying that, in his own estimation, Charlemagne was a foot-boy to him!

"I have a tale to tell which, as my coachman has no more ear for Christian discourse than one of the brutes he is driving, can never be more safely adventured than here on the Citizen King's highway," he resumed. "In the first place, know that, high as I have ascended in the scale of society, your humble servant was born in the confined sphere of a porter's lodge. The *cordon*, my natural inheritance, was neither that of the St. Esprit nor the Golden Fleece; but simply that cord by which my tender mother let in and out the visitors to an obscure house in the Rue Vendome. Ay—shrug your shoulders!—gay and brilliant as you behold me, I am actually a native of that most humdrum quarter of Paris—the Marais! Superior to, or perhaps only ashamed of, her humble vocation, my mother announced herself to me, as I grew to boy's estate, as the

widow of a captain of the *grande armee*; in witness whereof, she kept among the edibles in her corner cupboard an old ribbon of the Legion of Honor, and a bottle of Eau de Cologne cast in the effigy of Napoleon,—incontestable evidence of my parentage, to which I did due homage every time I paid my devoirs to her Gruyere cheese. I have my doubts whether the lodgers of the old den to which her services were attached were equally respectful; for I remember that my venerable parent was apt to treat them (behind their backs) with sovereign contempt; from the retired clock-maker, whose family occupied the first floor, to the *employes* in the *marche aux vieux linges*, who lodged on the *sixieme*. Of the horde who dealt out their five-franc pieces to her on New Year's Day, and their discontents, the remaining three hundred and sixty-four, there was only one whom Madame Goville—"

"Goville?"—I indiscreetly reiterated.

"Ay, my good sir. Since I have consented to deliver my round unvarnished tale, I may as well admit that only the two latter syllables of my name are derived from the ghost of the captain of the *grande armee*, or from his *soi-disant* widow. To resume,—where you so unnecessarily suspended my story,—there was only one among the lodgers especially recommended by my mother to my assiduity and forbearance.

"'Be sure,' she used to say, as she sat with her Roman nose crooked into the stocking she was mending (for, in spite of the ribbon of the Legion of Honor, Madame Goville stooped to follow the calling of a *ravaudeuse*,) 'be sure, Leonard, never to pass on the stairs or in the entry without a salutation, either Mademoiselle Brigitte, the maiden lady on the second floor, or *la mere* Pinson, her woman of all-work. Of all the abiders in this dog-hole of a house, *they*, my dear son, are to be respected. So little trouble as they give, and such handsome vails!—two three-livre crowns on the first of January, and another on Mademoiselle's fete-day;—and yet in bed every night of the blessed year by eight o'clock, and not a single visitor from one year's end to another, either to mistress or maid, to take the needle out of my hand, or give me the trouble of saying "At home," or "Not at home!"

"'To be sure, there is the nuisance of opening the gate three times a day for her beast of a poodle when *la mere* Pinson brings him down to the street; to say nothing of my anxieties in keeping the peace betwixt Mademoiselle Brigitte and Madame Alain, the old lady on the first floor, who swears that her mignionette and nasturtiums are ruined by the noisy beast of a cockatoo that hangs out of ma'amselles window.'

"'Say what you will against ma'amselle's cockatoo, mother,' cried I, 'but not a word against poor Mouton! Mouton is the cleverest dog and the best creature in the world.'

"'Ay, ay,—as troublesome and mischievous as thyself,' was the rejoinder of the captain's widow. 'But no matter; leave the poodle to itself, Nanard, and the poodle will leave *thee*. But whatever thou dost, be sure never to lose an opportunity of obliging or serving Mademoiselle Brigitte or her maid. I have heard it whispered by a little bird who never sings false, that mademoiselle (who has not a relation upon earth) is inscribed in the bank of France as owner of twice as large an amount as the richest proprietor in the Rue de Vendome!"

"You will admit that Madam Goville, good woman, took a stupid way of interesting the feelings of a child?—The bank of France was a mystery beyond my powers of developement; and it was chiefly as the mistress of Mouton that I felt inclined to love, honor, or obey Mademoiselle Brigitte Duval. For Mouton was the joy of my days, the dream of my nights.—A huge, woolly, rusty-coated poodle, unanimously kicked and cuffed by its mistress's fellow-lodgers whenever occasion offered,—the poor beast bestowed upon myself, his solitary friend, the rich treasure of his affections. Harrassed out of his life by the exaction of the two old women, to whom his antics afforded the sole diversion of their unincidental life, Mouton was only too rejoiced to escape from the stifling atmosphere of Mademoiselle de Brigitte's apartment to frolic with me in the narrow courtyard; or, when opportunity favoured our escape, to play truant with me for a course among the chesnut trees of the Place Royale. Right happy were we, Mouton and I, when we could fly together;—ay, even at the risk of a good

beating a-piece on our return, from those in authority over us.

All my regard for Mouton, however, did not prevent my perpetually incurring the displeasure of his misstress. A spell seemed set upon my endeavors to recommend myself to Mademoiselle Brigitte Duval's favor. I it was who admitted into the house the identical brindled cat by which the hopes of her first brood of canaries were demolished. The cherry-stone over which *la mere* Pinson's luckless foot slipped one summer morning,thereby originating a fracture which might have cost her her life, and *did* cost her lady a fortune in doctor's bills, was traced to a pound of *bigarreaux* which I had purchased and devoured on the staircase, by way of giving a lesson to Mouton in fetching and carrying with the stones.—In short. whatever evil chanced to the lady or the lady's maid, Leonard Goville was sure to be at the bottom of it;—luckily enough for me—for to insure my absence six days out of the seven, Mademoiselle Brigitte finally consented to unclose her purse-strings to pay for my schooling. But for my indefatigability in parading poor Mouton on the landing-place every morning, with his mistress's purloined parasol for a musket, to go through his manual exercise, I might have remained guiltless of the common rudiments of learning.

"I was almost repaid for the afflictions of exile from my illiterate home by the howl of rapture wherewith Mouton used to greet me every Sunday, the moment my well-known step was heard on the stairs. Mademoiselle Brigitte grumbled, indeed, that even this Sabbatical release from the labors of learning should be conceded to me. But on that point I was firm; swearing that, unless allowed to return home on Sundays, to pay my respects to my beloved parent and beloved poodle, I would not go to school at all.

"Three years had I been toiling through the labyrinth of letters, and the clumsy booby of ten was stretching into the lanky youth of thirteen; when my domestic happiness was overcast by perceiving that my faithful friend no longer enoyed the blessings of vigorous health. In proportion as my frame became elongated, that of the pampered poodle grew globose; and, instead of the saltatorial salutations wherewith he was wont to denote his joy at my weekly arrival,

he began to find some difficulty in wheezing his way to the head of the staircase to do me honor. It could not be old age; for Mouton, when introduced into my mother's lodge five years before in the apron of Madame Pinson, was a mere puppy—round, white, helpless, and featureless, as if rolled out of a filbert-nut. So sudden a progress of decay must clearly arise from inward disease; and tears burst on more than one occasion from my eyes, on learning that Mouton was given over by the faculty as under the influence of a confirmed liver-complaint! It was a tender subject to Mademoiselle Brigitte!—She, who had witnessed without a pang the extinction of her numerous family, could not summon courage to contemplate the day when Mouton was to be removed from her.

"'They have fed the poor dog to death, and there's an end of it,' was the reply of Captain Goville's widow, when I appealed to her sympathy.

"'No, no, not an end of it!' cried I. 'Something might surely be done. Abounding as this great metropolis does in scientific practitioners, Mouton might yet be saved. Yes, mother, yes, madam, Mouton might yet be saved.'

"'I shouldn't care a pinch of snuff if he were strung up to yonder clothes'-line!' was the hard-hearted rejoinder of Madame Goville. 'But true it is that the grand dog-doctor, who came last week all the way from the Champs Elysees in his own carriage for a consultation, swore that the dog had a dozen years' life in him, if his mistress would only consent to put him upon a regiment.'

"'Into a regiment?' said I, somewhat astonished.

"'No, child! To starve him till the bones come through his skin. That's what the faculty call putting upon a regiment. Yet, for all I can argue, or the doctor devise, Mademoiselle persists in killing him with kindness. The last gentleman who attended him, from the famous *Hopital des Chiens* in the Rue de Clichy, swore that if they went on *stuffing* the poor beast, Mouton hadn't a month to live; and then,' continued my mother, with a grim smile, 'if they like they may stuff him for good and all.'

"She ought not to have jested, for the tears were coursing each other down her son's innocent nose. Escaping from her presence, I hurried to the Rue de Clichy. I resolved to

know the worst. I chose to see the Dupuytren of the canine race, and learn the fate of Mouton from scientific lips.

"Did you ever happen to notice in your wanderings," continued D'Egoville, turning abruptly towards me, "just opposite to the gates of the Tivoli Gardens, and perfumed by the fragrant atmosphere of its lilacs and roses, an elegant architectural-looking edifice, the door of which is surmounted by the effigy of a dog? That airy structure is the *Hopital des Chiens*, I say, 'the' *par excellence*, to distinguish it from the numerous dog-hospitals which drain the purses of the dowagers of Paris. After a timid ring at the bell, I was admitted into the *bureau* of the establishment; a handsome room, furnished with illustrated editions of the best physiological authorities, and a desk, on which lay the day-book and ledgers of the hospital. It had not struck eleven; till which hour I knew that Dr. Mirabeau received patients, previous to setting forth in his carriage for his daily consultations.

"I had not yet ventured to take a seat, when the doctor appeared, a smug, smiling, grey-headed gentleman, habited in professional black, and wearing diamond studs in his shirt, and at his button-hole the riband of the national order. He entered, rubbing his hands with the self-gratulating air peculiar to his obnoxious species.

"In a few words I explained my errand.

"'Let me see!' said he, taking from his pocket a richly gilt morocco pocket-book, containing notes of his consultations. 'Last week, you say; a grey poodle in the Rue de Vendome? Exactly. Here we have him! "Mouton, aged five years and three months, the property of Mademoiselle Brigitte Duval." A very serious case, sir,' he continued, shaking his head. 'Complete derangement of the epigastric region, hepatic inflammations, irregular action of the pulse, altogether an important complication. Nevertheless, I have hope. Removed from the disadvantages under which he at present labours, my patient might still live to be a delight to the Duval family. But it is one of the misfortunes, sir, which beset the gentlemen of my profession, that our best endeavours are counteracted by the injudicious indulgence of the ladies and gentlemen to whom we look for the reward of our labours. If the individual in question,

for instance, were to be only one month an inmate of my establishment, I would answer for restoring him to perfect health.'

"With a heavy sigh (for I was painfully aware that, sooner than part with poor Mouton, even for a day, Mademoiselle Brigitte would resign her right hand), I now put into Monsieur Mirabeau's hand the two-franc piece, which I understood to be his fee, and received, in return, a low bow, and the tariff of his establishment.

"'Monsieur would perhaps like to inspect the hospital?' said he, accompanying me forth; and, on my eager assent, he conducted me across a yard sanded with scrupulous neatness, and adorned with orange-trees and other flowering shrubs, to an airy building, divided into several wards; one partitioned into kennels, others having commodious beds, while a third consisted in rows of perches and cages, as an infirmary for birds. All the patients with which they were filled, both bipeds and quadrupeds, bestowed on my conductor most affectionate greetings, which were requited by Monsieur Mirabeau with an air of tender affability, such as may have been assumed by Bonaparte in visiting the lazaretto of Jaffa; or by Louis Philippe, when parading the Hotel Dieu, after the revolution of July. From the asthmatic pug, panting on its straw, to the opera dancer's delicate Italian greyhound, about to be *in* the straw, all present turned their eyes gratefully on the benefactor of their race.

"'They love me, poor little animals!' said Monsieur le Docteur, with a magnanimous glance along the ward. 'One of my most exquisite rewards is the gratitude of the little beings committed to my care.'

"As we re-crossed the yard he was accosted by a mincing *grisette*, elegantly attired, with inquiries after the health of '*cette pauvre Zephyrine.*'

"'*Zephyrine?*' reiterated the doctor, in an inquiring tone.

"'The *griffon* of Madame la Baronne de Montgelas.'

"'Allow me to consult my registers,' replied the Monsieur Mirabeau, hurrying into his sanctum, while I waited with the waiting-maid at the door, and saw him, spectacles on nose, examine his books of entry.

"'DEAD!' was the result of the investigation; a monosyllable that called forth a torrent of ejaculation from the

*soubrette.* Monsieur Mirabeau proceeded to read aloud, 'Zephyrine, a white *griffon*, introduced into the establishment on the 13th of May; died on the 27th. *Oui, mademoiselle!* On Wednesday last, my little patient breathed her last. According to custom, I performed the autopsy of the body. The disease proved to be inflammation of the brain, precisely as I hinted to Madame la Baronne, on first pointing out to her that the fits of her *griffon* were of an epileptic nature.'

"Leaving the doctor and the lady to discuss the diseases of Zephyrine together, I hastened to reflect upon the doom of a being more interesting to my affections. But already my determination was taken.

"That evening, my dear sir, Mouton disappeared from the Rue de Vendome. I leave you to guess the astonishment, anguish, and surmises produced by this inexplicable disparition. Though incapable, by reason of his malady, of descending the staircase, he was gone; either the victim of malice, or the prey of cupidity, either assassinated by a fellow lodger, or stolen for the sake of his skin. A handsome reward was instantly offered for his recovery, and the walls of the Marais were covered with handbills. In vain!

"I leave you to guess the indignant agonies of Mademoiselle Brigitte and her maid, more especially as every soul in the house evinced unequivocal symptoms of satisfaction. Three whole weeks did they pass in tears—three whole weeks did Madame Pinson, according to her own account, remain utterly sleepless. The two disconsolate women were accustomed to sit in the dusk every evening, recounting to each other's sympathy the feats and accomplishments of their lost favourite, now probably numbered with the dead. When, lo! at the close of the fourth week, Mademoiselle Brigitte was startled out of her sleep one Sunday morning by an unwonted scratching at her door, and, on unclosing it, in bounded a handsome healthy quadruped, faintly resembling the idol of other times. The well-combed coat and shapely form of the new comer bore, however, little affinity to the wheezing lump which in latter days had answered to the name of Mouton; and when, at the ejaculation of that once-loved name, the intruder raised himself on his hinder legs, and, advancing towards Ma'amselle Brigitte's

head, performed a succession of well-remembered feats of agility, the astonished old lady began to fancy that the grave had yielded up its dead. 'Mouton!' cried she again; and laying its now gelid muzzle to her beloved hand, the faithful beast licked it in a paroxysm of tenderness, 'Yes, it *was* her Mouton; her own—her only, restored to health, beauty, youth, and happiness!'

"But, by what extraordinary interposition was the miracle accomplished?—None could say! The delighted mistress and maid were forced to content themselves with the belief that supernatural aid had been vouchsafed to restore their darling—a new Eurydice—to their affections.

"It was not till when, on the following winter, I received something nearly approaching to a thrashing from Madame Goville on the discovery that my warm great coat had disappeared as unaccountably as poor Mouton, by way of defence, I ventured to place in her hand the card of the

'HOPITAL POUR LES CHINES.

Chats, Oiseaux, et autres Animaux, tenu par M. le Docteur Mirabeau, qui prend aussi des pensionnaries.

PRIX.

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|---|---|---|---|
| 1 Consultation . . | 2 fr. | 1 Coupe d'Oreilles . . | 2 fr. |
| 1 Visite . . . . | 3 " | 1 Idem de queue . . | 1 " |
| 1 Saignee . . . | 3 " | 1 Autopsie . . . | 3 " |
| 1 Posee de sangsues . | 3 " | | |

Pour les fractures et autres operations, on traite de convenance, &c. &c.'

having on the reverse a lithographic vignette, representing the Dog-Hospital.

"'I see how it is!' cried Madame Goville, after casting her eyes over an annexed bill, amounting to forty-three francs ten sous, for a month's board of a sick poodle, bran-baths, sea-weed poultices, drugs, and other remedies, supplied for the same. 'Unprincipled little wretch! You actually disposed of your warm *paletot* in order to insure the restoration of that beast of a dog. Just as you please! But *I* will take care that you have never another great coat to your back till you have earned one by your own exertions.'

"'He *has* earned one!' was Mademeoiselle Brigitte's exclamation when the secret transpired, and reached her

ears. 'And, so long as Leonard lives, he shall never want a warm coat to his back.'

"Such, my dear sir (for here we are within view of my gate,) such was the trivial cause which determined the old lady to give me the education of a gentleman. Three years afterwards, on the opening of her last will and testament, it was discovered that Mademoiselle Brigitte had left me her universal legatee. The ill-natured world persists in believing me to be her son. But it is no such thing. Like other great men, I am *le fils de mes œuvres ;* and my *chef d'œuvre* was my preservation of the life of poor Mouton, by kidnapping him to L'Hopital des Chiens."

# THE FATAL WINDOW.

BY "THE OLD BACHELOR IN PARIS."

We crack-brained saunterers through life, whose brains are stuffed to overflowing with odd shreds and patches of tradition, are apt to affix a value to circumstances of locality, trifles of no account in the eyes of sober minded men, and wholly overlooked by the ordinary observer. Till within the last few months, there existed in the Place Vendome, marring the uniformity of its presentment, a single window, whose narrow panes and old-fashioned framing afforded a remarkable contrast to the noble plate-glass so much better proportioned to the majestic architecture of the place, which filled the windows of the neighboring houses. Though the chamber to which it admitted light was situated on the first floor, or *etage a'honneur*, of one of the finest hotels of the square, it had evidently remained untouched from the period of its construction; when even the palaces of the first kingdom of Europe betrayed, in the inadequate quality and size of their window-panes, the imperfect progress of one of the most ancient and beautiful of the arts of invention.

Every other drawing-room of the Place Vendome was adorned with capacious *carreaux*, so transparent as to deceive the eye into doubts of any intervening medium between the cozy warmth within and the chilly atmosphere without. Yet in that one window (the fatal window, as it

was designated by all the old people of the neighborhood,) there remained the small, green, veiny squares, through which the financier, Law, used to gaze upon the gathering of the multitude below, who first thronged thither to purchase his worthless paper; and finally, with the hope of tearing to pieces the arch-imposter by whom that scheme of financial knavery was devised for the ruin of thousands.

It was not, however, during John Law's occupancy of the hotel in question that the event took place, which was the cause of affixing to the window in question so startling a designation.

The sale of the adventurer's goods and chattels, consequent upon the breaking of the bubble, had placed the noble mansion in the hands of one of the most opulent of that unpopular tribe, the *Fermiers Generaux* of the kingdom. Monsieur de Raynolle (whose financial exertions were, not to speak it profanely, strictly within the letter of the law) was a man who regarded with horror the dealings of his predecessors as irregularities, innovations, inbreaks into the routine of financial credit. He considered the post he had purchased as the means of honestly turning his capital to account. It had pleased Heaven to make him rich; it pleased himself to make himself richer. Like the greater number of his confraternity, he did not slumber upon his opulence, but enjoyed an all but regal share of the luxuries and transports of life; purchasing at the highest cost, not only the *chef d'œuvres* of art or science, but the society of the most eminent among the wits, poets, philosophers, statesmen, and beauties of his time. For such things *are* purchasable; not, as the bargain-drivers say, from hand to hand, but by splendid banquets, brilliant entertainments, and all the garlands and frippery suspended by the hand of luxury over the wooden frame-work of life!

The Duc de Choiseul and the Comte de Lauraguais, the profligate Richelieu and the brilliant Soubise, were frequent guests of Monsieur Raynolle, both in his Place Vendome Hotel, and at his splendid chateau de Draveil. Nay, even St. Lambert and Marmontel, the Abbe Voisenon, and Baron Grimm, crowded eagerly to his *petits soupers*. Nothing could be more *recherche* than the fare; nothing more fashionable than the society assembled. It was impossible to

outrage moral feeling, or laugh at the notion of a Providence, with a better grace than did the guests of Monsieur Raynolle, the *Fermier General!* One might have fancied that this buyer-up of the good and beautiful things of this world, had also contracted with the great Disposer of events for impunity from judgment to come!

An yet the reckless libertine had a wife,—young, beautiful, brilliant, shrewd,—in name, if not in nature, an Englishwoman.

In the course of his mercantile dealings, some ten years before, Raynolle had become acquainted with a man named Darley; the poor, but honest cashier of a house of business, having intimate connections with the English market; and Raynolle, on discovering that the daughter (for whom, in addition to a couple of grown-up sons, the indigent clerk was indebted to his marriage with a portionless Frenchwoman, of indifferent reputation) was young and beautiful beyond even the the renowned beauties whom he was bold enough to consider his own, made no doubt of attaching her name to the catalogue of his household property. Neither Hester Darley nor her mother seemed, indeed, to oppose much obstacle to the supposition. His costly gifts were so well received, his tedious visits were so obsequiously welcomed during the absence of the poor cashier on his daily duties, that Raynolle was almost pardonable in believing that the time was not far distant when further visits would become superfluous. In this insolent surmise, he was strengthened by the discovery that Hester's elder brother, John Darley, had formed a clandestine marriage, almost as imprudent as his father's, and that extreme misery might be expected to silence *his* opposition to the disgrace of his sister.

Of the younger brother, Gerard, the *Fermier General* knew nothing, for he was with the army in Flanders—a soldier of fortune; nor was it till the very eve of the day which Raynolle had marked for the *enlevement* of Hester Darley, that the sudden arrival of the impetuous young man, to whom some considerate neighbor had despatched tidings of what was passing in his father's house, threw the projects of the *Fermier General* into confusion.

"I am neither a brawler nor a bully," said Gerard Dar-

ley, on finding Raynolle, as he had been taught to expect, established as master of the house during his father's absence, "and the airs of grandeur you would assume with me, *Monsieur le richard*, are wholly thrown away. I fear neither the canes of your footmen nor the staves of the *huissiers*, with whose aid you are accustomed to make war upon your debtors. Only this I tell you, without rancor or malice,—that you leave this house as the affianced husband of my sister, or you leave it not alive. Hester is your equal, sir,—for *you* possess riches and consideration, *she* youth and beauty; and, in point of family, both are alike sprung from the people. But even did there exist a disparity of condition, you should have thought of it before your visits here brought disgrace on an honest family!"

Madame Darley and her daughter listened in consternation to this arrogant address, not conceiving that the unsupported menaces of a youth of Gerard's age could be productive of any other result than that of incensing against them the munificent patron to whom they had so many obligations; and Hester grew pale with rage at the idea of any interruption to an intimacy which had been the means of affording such luxurious indulgences to her vanity, and rendering her an object of envy to their less fortunate neighbors. But her vexation was soon converted into hope of a more favorable issue, on discerning the weakness and terror of poor Raynolle, when he found himself yet more vigorously pressed by the reckless young sergeant of dragoons. With features contracted by rage, he finally yielded to the imperious demands of Gerard Darley. A notary was sent for; a legal signature secured; and when Raynolle, according to his previous intention, bore the beautiful Hester from her obscure home, it was as his lawful wife! Only one stipulation did the wily financier make on the occasion,—that not a syllable should be suffered to transpire of the mode in which the marriage had been achieved; while his sole act of vengeance upon those of whom he conceived himself the dupe, consisted in a decree that not one of the Darley family should ever set foot within his gates.

Meanwhile, the admiration excited in society by the charms of the new beauty (as Madame Raynolle was universally denominated by the gallants of the court), almost

reconciled her vain-glorious husband to a connection into which he had been forced at the point of the sword. Of her origin nothing was known; and the financier having been artful enough to make a hurried journey to London previous to placing his beautiful bride at the head of his establishment, Madame Raynolle passed among her husband's friends as a *belle milady*, whom he had brought back with him from the chartered fatherland of fine horses and fine women.

Who now so worshipped as the charming wife of the millionary *Fermier General?*—Her portrait was on the easel of every artist; her name imparted distinction to every fashionable invention. To the indignation of Madame de Pompadour, ribbons were tied up in bows *a la* Raynolle; chickens stewed *a la* Raynolle; *pralines* crisped *a la* Raynolle; carriages painted in garlands *a la* Raynolle; every thing worn, tasted, or displayed at that moment in Paris, was named in honor of the divinity in whose hair flashed a coronet of diamonds surpassing even that of the Queen; and towards whose box at the opera, the eyes and acclamations of the whole assembly were directed. Voltaire addressed to her, under the name of Neæra, one of his choicest odes; and the prettiest of Marmontel's tales was dedicated to the presiding angel of the Place Vendome.

The *Fermier General* was satisfied. *Eclat* was all he coveted in the world; and his handsome young wife excited as much applause as his statues of Daphne and Chloe, by Couston, or the frescos of his dining-room by Boucher. He saw himself an object of envy, and was content. Already, too, he recognised a kindred spirit in the lovely Hester. Vain and ostentatious, her nature was cold and artificial as his own; and he was indebted to his wife for a thousand cogent suggestions for the advancement of their position in society. The purchase of a princely estate in Languedoc, endowed with privileges of ennoblement, converted them into the Marquis and Marquise de Montmery; the purchase of an office in the royal household entitled them to an *entree* at court. In consideration of the fair aspirant after the honors of Versailles, Louis XV made no opposition; and though certain of the more stiff-necked of the Queen's ladies were indignant at seeing a mere *bourgeoise* raised to

their level, they dared not venture upon any open demonstrations of displeasure. In the *grand monde* of Paris, as in the laws of England, "*le Roi le veut*" rendered the rule absolute.

On the nights when the *fetes* of the new Marquise de Montmery set the windows of her hotel into a blaze, as vast a crowd was collected in the Place Vendome as in the tumultuous days of John Law. Many among them had witnessed the triumphs of that unprincipled adventurer.

"At that very window he used to stand, and with fiendish glee survey the poor dupes below, the last livre of whose earnings he was filching!" they would exclaim, pointing to a window of the first floor, from which now issued a dazzling gleam of light, emitted by the brilliant boudoir of the lovely Marquise. Others, turning from the spot, were heard to whisper, "The place is doomed! A curse ought to be upon the window from whence John Law numbered his victims!"

Instead of a curse, however, a blessing seemed to be on all belonging to the Marquis and Marquise de Montmery. As their prodigality increased, their means became doubled. His speculations were uniformly triumphant, till "lucky as Montmery" became a proverb in the money-market of more than one European city. Fifteen years after the marriage (on the origin of which he no longer suffered a reflection to disturb the harmony of his thoughts) the *Fermier General* was as fast united to his fair Hester by similarity of tastes and pursuits, as he had formerly been by the brilliancy of a complexion, which, sooth to say, was now, like most dazzlingly fair complexions, somewhat on the wane.

The time was now come, indeed, for the Marchioness to experience a similar change in the colour of her fortunes. One evening about ten years after her marriage, during the absence of her husband who was inspecting the erection of a splendid conservatory at Draveil, a strange cavalier insisted on forcing his way into her presence with a vehemence not to be withstood by a whole regiment of lacqueys.

"Yes, it is I!" cried Gerard Darley, flinging down his hat on a table of malachite and gold, on finding himself face to face with his proud sister in her luxurious boudoir. "You are surprised to see me here. You had hoped never to see

me again. Ungrateful for the energy of soul and arm which served to place you in the position you now occupy, you despise your obscure brother, who, trust me, Madam, renders back with interest the contempt of the Marquise de Montmery!"

"You must be aware that the prohibitions of my husband——" Madame de Montmery was beginning.

"I have sedulously respected them," replied Gerard, with a bitter sneer. "I did not appeal to your opulence when your parents lay dying in misery and neglect. I did not appeal to your affection when your wretched brother, distracted by the loss of his young wife, fell by his own hand, leaving two helpless orphans to my protection. I did not appeal to your pity when one of these poor babes, requiring tenderer aid than could be afforded by its soldier uncle, pined away till it rejoined its parents in the grave. I appeal not to it even now, Madam, though one of the only two on earth in whose veins blood kindred with your own is flowing, stands in urgent need of your protection. But I command it, Hester! I command it in the name of those who gave you life;—I command it in the name of that most high God who hath called them to himself. I command it in the name of the world's opinion, more influential over your mind than either!"

"What is it you require of me?" faltered the Marchioness, overawed by the resolute sternness of her brother.

"That during my absence in the opening campaign you accord your protection to the orphan daughter of John Darley," replied Gerard. "The camp is not a fit home for a girl of her years and beauty; and where am I to place her, unless where she has a right to be, in the household of her nearest female relative?"

"It is well," replied Madame de Montmery, coldly. "During your absence my niece shall be duly cared for."

"I had rather the words were uttered in a more womanly tone," remonstrated Gerard; "nevertheless, I accept the pledge. Hester Darley is now fifteen—fair and innocent, as was a former Hester Darley at those tender years. Her birth and breeding, though humble, are equal to those of the Marquise de Montmery. She must not be treated as a slave, she must not be treated as a menial."

"She shall be treated as my brother's child," interrupted Hester, eager to bring the interview to a close.

"Nay, more. Unendowed with the means of forming a noble alliance, I will not have her thrust into the dissolute circles that frequent this house. Let her dwell in seclusion till my return, when I shall require at your hands an account of her welfare. You know me—you are aware that Gerard Darley is not to be trifled with. Let the prosperity of my poor charge allow me nothing to complain of."

However irritated by the arrogance of the trooper's tone, Madame de Montmery felt that the best method to keep peace with him was to subscribe to his conditions; and within an hour, the young girl, as yet a stranger to her, was deposited under her care. That night young Hester Darley slept under the roof of the Marchioness.

The only comfort to the aunt, on beholding the extraordinary beauty of the girl thus peremptorily committed to her charge, was the injunction of Gerard that she should not figure in the gay society of the Hotel Montmery. Hester Darley, though presenting an extraordinary resemblance to her aunt and namesake, was a thousand times lovelier than the Marchioness, even in her prime. She possessed that transparent fairness rarely seen unless in persons of English descent, enhanced by a glossy elasticity, which sadly put to shame the faded cheeks of her kinswoman, withered by vigils and dissipation.

"This would never do!" murmured Madame de Montmery, as she noted the resplendent beauty of the timid young girl. "I would not that even the Marquis should see me thrown into the shade by this minion. This very day I shall despatch her, under the care of my woman, to the Superior at Moret, where, till Gerard's return, she may abide for the completion of her education; and should he fall in the wars, as his headlong rashness renders probable, she may become a permanent inmate of the convent. The good abbess has too many obligations to us not to accept a moderate dowry with a kinswoman of the Marchioness de Montmery."

On the return of the Marquis from Draveil, the affair was briefly explained to him; when, as usual, he approved of the arrangements of his wife. But he testified little interest

in the affair. His faculties were already impaired by the influence of a malady, which, in a few weeks time, carried him to the grave, leaving Madame la Marquise sole comptroller of his princely inheritance.

Engrossed by the cares and irritations inseparable from such a charge, Madame de Montmery had scarcely enough leisure to discover the tediousness of a year of widowhood. Though resolved to reappear in the world at its expiration more brilliant than ever, to imbibe anew the incense of poets and flatterers of the Court, and, if possible, unite herself in second marriage with a man of untarnished blazon and illustrious lineage, she was too much occupied with processes of law, and the *comptes rendus* of her various intendants, to do more than direct the preparation of an infinity of rich attires, and costly suits of jewels, in which she intended to blaze forth on her re-appearance at Versailles. Madame de Pompadour's death (which occurred eight months after that of the Marquis) had cleared the way for a thousand ambitious projects on the part of the unprincipled beauties of the Court of Louis XV.

Of "*cette jeune Esther*," meanwhile, the ostentatious widow knew no more than was communicated once a quarter by her friend the abbess, namely, that she edified the whole convent by her piety, gentleness, and grace, to say nothing of the divine beauty which one day or other, would cause strange emotions among the profane; laudations, accompanied, of course, with the usual claims for the cost of the young lady's maintenance and education. These missives were carefully laid aside by Madame de Montmery, to be exhibited to her severe brother on his return from the army, in evidence of the noble manner in which she had performed her duty to his *protegee*.

From time to time there arrived a harsh letter from Darley, demanding tidings of his beloved Hester, his nursling, his darling, to which the Marchioness returned a dry and succinct reply. But she saw that there must be no trifling with this stern guardian, that she was deeply accountable to him for the welfare of the girl, and that he was capable of proceeding to the worst extremities to avenge any evil that might befal his favourite niece.

What, therefore, was the consternation of Madame de

Montmery when, at the expiration of the fifth quarter of Hester's residence at Moret, and of her own widowhood,—just as she was beginning to enjoy, with almost more than her former animation, the gorgeous festivals of Versailles, and the addresses of a hundred noble adorers, she was apprised by the superior of Moret that Mademoiselle Darley (no longer *cette belle Esther!*) must be instantly removed from the establishment. In the hope of softening by a gratuity the determination of the abbess, Madame de Montmery hastened with all speed to Moret; but alas! only to find her perplexities converted into utter consternation. The gentle, timid Hester, the model of *pensionnaires*, had disgraced the convent—her family—herself! Permitted, by the indulgence of the partial abbess, to accompany the noble family of one of her companions to a royal *rendezvous de chasse*, held within half a league of Moret, during the sojourn of the court at Fontainebleau, Hester, on the second day of the fete, had disappeared from her friends,—had been forty-eight hours absent,—and, at length, made her way on foot to the gates of the convent in such a plight as to render her reception a matter of grace on the part of the abbess. To these humiliating statements, and the bursts of fury from the Marchioness which succeeded, poor Hester, pale and motionless as a statue, replied only by an almost unconscious assertion that she was married,—that time would bring her innocence to light,—in confirmation of which she showed on her finger a diamond ring of considerable value. Her two judges were startled. They saw at once that she had fallen a victim to some bold and practised seducer of the Court. But neither persuasions nor menaces could extract from the lips of the young girl further avowals, further explanation. So public, meanwhile, had been the scandal, that the abbess persisted in her refusal to retain her *pensionnaire;* and, sorely against her will, the Marchioness was forced to convey back the humbled delinquent to the Hotel de Montmery.

A secluded chamber was now assigned to Hester. The Marchionness decided that the disgrace of the recent event could only be obliterated by an immediate marriage; and nothing was easier than for the rich widow to secure, by a sufficient dowry, an alliance suitable to the modest preten-

sions of her neice. She even commenced negotiations with the intendant of her Languedoc estates for the hand of his son; and finally signified to Hester, that unless the unknown seducer, whose name she refused to disclose, presented himself within two months to claim her as his wife, she must give her hand to Alexis Duval. Madame de Montmery trembled at the mere apprehension of Gerald's return, till the clearing up of a mystery so dishonorable to his beloved niece.

Meanwhile, nothing could exceed the wretchedness of the unhappy Hester. Her obstinacy in refusing to disclose the name of him whom she regarded as her plighted husband, arose, in truth, from ignorance of his title. In offering himself as her protector when separated from her party by the crowd assembled in the gardens of the palace of Fontainbleau to witness a *feu d'artifice* in honor of the King's arrival, he had described himself as one of the royal household; and, on her ingenuous avowal of her own name and situation had declared himself to be an intimate acquaintance of the Marquise de Montmery. Confiding in this assurance, the poor girl, in the course of the scandalous deceptions practised upon her, after being persuaded to accept a refuge in the palace, gave full credit to his assertions that his rank and fortune were such as to preclude all possibility of refusal on the part of her relations, when he should present himself to claim the hand of his affianced wife. How could she disbelieve him? His deportment was so noble,—his eloquence so convincing,—his manner so graceful! He was the only man from whose lips she had heard avowals of admiration, professions of love; and even now, amid all her humiliations (and the discredit thrown upon her assertions, of having escaped from the palace, on discovering that attempts were made to detain her a prisoner,) those professions and those graceful gestures dwelt upon her memory as endowed with only too dangerous a charm. She felt that she could love only that audacious stranger. Morning, noon, and night she prayed upon her bended knees that he might fulfil his pledge, and appear to claim her as his own, so as to prevent her being forced into a hateful marriage, to the injury of an honorable man.

Certain, from their former conversation, that he for whose crime she was making atonement, was well acquainted with

her abode, and might have learned at Moret her removal from the convent, she persuaded herself day after day that her penance was about to end,—that he would come,—that the preparations for her marriage with Alexis Duval would be discontinued,—that happiness was still in store for her. But every night she laid down her aching head upon a sleepless pillow!—No token of his arrival,—no change in her destinies!

Madame de Montmery had nothing further to apprehend from the introduction of the poor girl into her *coterie*. "*Cette belle Esther*" was wasting to a shaddow. Not a tinge of color on her cheeks,—not a spark of animation in her downcast eyes. To crown all, the preliminaries of peace were signed, and it was expected that a few weeks' time would bring back the French armies from Germany! The Marchioness actually shuddered as she anticipated the arrival of her brother.

"Expect not a day's delay after the appointed period," said she to her suffering niece. "Alexis Duval is already arrived in Paris. The writings are preparing. You will find that I have supplied a handsome dowry and noble *trousseau*. I have neglected nothing to secure the happiness of her who has so ill repaid my former bounties."

Sometimes poor Hester persuaded herself that her unknown lover, not daring to present himself to Madame de Montmery, might be wandering in the vicinity of the Hotel, in the hopes of catching a glimpse of the object of his attachment. Her allotted chamber overlooked the court-yard; she had no means of obtaining a view of the place. Aware, however, that every day at a certain hour Madame de Montmery quitted the Hotel to exhibit herself and her sumptuous equipage on the Cours la Reine, she watched one morning till the coach and six rolled out of the *porte cochere*, and the household servants retreated to the offices; then, stealing from her retreat, made her way to those gorgeous saloons which she never considered without awe, as the habitation of her heartless kinswoman. With a stealthy step she traversed the gaudy chambers, across whose windows were drawn heavy draperies of crimson brocade, embelished with fringes of golden bullion. But the fresh air from without, reached her as she approached the boudoir

terminating the suite. That window at least must be open. The termination of all her sorrows was perhaps at hand!—and, with the sanguine impetuosity of youth, the heart of the poor invalid beat almost to bursting, when she reflected that she might be on the eve of beholding him whose features were indelibly impressed upon her memory,—upon her affections. He, at least, would not despise her—he, at least, must still treat her with gentleness and respect.

At that moment a strain of music reached her from without. A military band was striking up in the Place, as if to honor the arrival of some royal personage. With a panting bosom, regardless of the strange figure she must present with her dishevelled hair and long white wrapper, Hester approached the open window. A brilliant procession was indeed passing; the King in person, followed by his whole *etat major*, proceeding to pass in review his royal guard upon the esplanade of the Hotel des Invalides.

Amid the tumultuous clash of cymbals and braying of trumpets that celebrated the royal progress, the crowd assembled in the Place fancied they heard a piercing shriek. And it might be so; for the royal personage, whose uncovered head was so affably declined to the salutations of the multitude, was no other than the lawless libertine of Fontainebleau; and the fair and wasted corpse which, on the return of Madame de Montmery from her drive, was found extended across the still of the fatal window, was that of the predestined niece of Gerard Darley!

Fortunately for the Marchioness, her brother was not fated to return alive to France to work out his threat of retribution. It was considered a singular circumstance, however, that from the period in question to the day of her death, she never again set foot in her Hotel in the Place Vendome. Many people conceived that her precipitate retreat to her estates in Languedoc was produced by the refusal of the King to sign her contract of marriage with the Comte de Blainvilier, a member of the royal household. But the publication of the archives of police at the Revolution, proved that Madame de Montmery had been escorted thither under surveillance, by virtue of a *lettre de cachet*. She was never suffered to re-appear at court,—Louis XV being desirous to usurp to himself the monopoly of heartlessness

and crime, as well as to secure the secret of his disgraceful excesses.

Such was the history of the Fatal Window, to which a superstitious charm was long attached by the after possessors of the Hotel de Montmery. The demolition of this strange memento of the vices of the olden time occurred within the last few months, in the course of the improvements achieved in the house by its new proprietress,—the Baroness de Feucheres!

# THE RAILROAD.

STERNE's declaration of war against the man who could travel from Dan to Beersheba and "find all barren," is often quoted in a positive and physical sense, by persons who do not seem aware that the denunciation of the sensitive Yorick referred to the exercise of

> That inward eye
> Which is the bliss of solitude;

that his diatribe is directed against the stockfish who surveys mankind from China to Peru without finding a kindred sympathy excited; not against such travellers as, condemned to traverse the surface of the world, whether in a '*desobligeante*" or a chaise and four, behold only flatness in the fields and sterility in the mountains. Yorick himself, for instance, must have admitted the unloveliness of those monotonous plains of cornfield and vineyard which clothe the greater portion of the kingdom of France; dotted with staring unsheltered villages, traversed by straight and hedgeless roads, unenriched by the ornate abodes of the great and wealthy, unendeared by the snug homesteads, the nooky farms, and all the love-stirring domesticity of the rural population of shrubby England!

It is, however, the very absence of circumstantial beauty, constituting the true picturesque of rustic landscape, that imparts a double charm to the occasional snatches of woodland seclusion we stumble upon in the by-ways of the

"*plaisant pays de France*;" such as lodges fast by the side of some ancient forest; farm-houses modernized within the ruins of a dilapidated convent; stream-encircled peninsulas embedding a village of almost amphibious growth, with long loose willow-bows streaming above, and a phalanx of sedges and bulrushes rising around, like a magic fortification; or, better still, some long-winding, sequestered valley, with a bubbling stream keeping alive its verdure, the green moss of the rising bank on one side shining brightly between the white stems of the abele trees, which, on the other, rustle between the river and the road.

Such was the peculiar attraction of the scattered hamlet of Pierrevau, dotted along a verdant dingle in one of the loneliest cantons of the province of Burgundy; rarely visited, never molested; slumbering, from year to year, in the midst of widely-spreading woodlands; and remote, by two leagues, from the by-road communicating again, at three leagues distance, with the high-road leading from Dijon to Lyons. Nothing could be more finely primitive than the village and its little community. The adjacent forest-lands being an appanage of the crown, the green basin included within their protecting skirts was divided into some half dozen insignificant farms, cultivated by proprietors united among themselves by intermarriages; undisturbed by ambition or speculative projects; indifferent to the faint rumors of the far-off world—to the progress of human knowledge—to the growth of civilized institutions; familiar only with the earth under their feet and the sky above their heads; nay, far more familiarized with the idea of the omnipotent King of Kings weekly propounded to their love and reverence, than with that of the merely temporal sovereign whose name became paramount in the valley only four times a-year, on occasions of tax-gathering, or other direct or indirect contributions towards the maintenance of the state.

Even the periodical intercourse kept up in the way of trade with M——, the nearest market town (at the distance of about thirteen English miles from Pierrevau), tended little towards either the enlightenment or demoralization of the place. Besnard the miller, the only scholar of the district, found himself too heavily charged with neighborly commissions on such occasions, to have leisure for bringing back

political or other news among the items of his homeward-bound cargo; and of the farmers forming the complement of village *notabilites*, only one was sufficiently addicted to letters to have been capable of spelling out a newspaper, had any such bulletin of the sayings and doings of mankind found its way into the valley.

Nor was the tax of postage often levied on their modest treasuries. Such Pierrevalites as, few and far between, became smitten with a taste for roaming, were heard of at home no more till they arrived in person to relate their adventures or misadventures in the wider world; and those who appeared not again, whether carried off by the conscription or a truant disposition, came to be accounted dead and buried, though neither letter nor sepulchral stone might be deputed to "tell where they lay. It may easily be conjectured, therefore, that such wanderers as *did* return, came fraught with monstrous tales and inventions of the marvels of distant countries and Indian oceans;—that the travels of Sinbad and Gulliver were emulated in their reminiscences; and that the common world became a world of wonders to the guileless inhabitants of the valley.

The cure, a grey-headed man, sometimes ventured to point out inconsistencies in the tales thus rendered legendary among his credulous parishioners. But the good man, whose lore little exceeded that of his neighbors, was readily rebuked by the citation of Scriptural precedents; and compelled to avow, in apology, that the age of miracles might not be altogether past. For, though the course of nature was so smooth at Pierrevau,—though year after year the roses blew to a day, cultivated in his little garden to decorate his church for its patronal feast of St. John,—though the hazels ripened in due season in the thickets, and the tender sallows put forth their yellow catkins,—though the swallow and the woodcock had their appointed time, and the yellow grain or purple clover its stated harvests,—what right had he or his flock to deny the existence of countries whose pebbles were of jaspar, whose rocks of sardine stone,—whose bowels gave forth flames as from the depths of Tophet,—whose bosom quaked and trembled, as with a convulsion of human passion,—whose swallows were

ever on the wing,—whose cornfields of fourfold produce?—

Among the most passive of the modifications of human nature inhabiting Pierrevau, was a widower of the name of Lambert; an aged man, whose cottage, garden, and an adjoining paddock, having descended to him in a direct line for four generations, qualified him to rank as an equal among neighboring farmers of thrice his number of acres. His outlay was small, his gains uniform; he had never been required to strain a nerve or a muscle to cope with extraordinary expenditure, sickness, or disaster; his days and nights had passed in easy contentment and cheerful labor; he took pleasure in the earth and its gladsome sounds and sights; rejoiced in the good will of his neighbors; and seemed to know no deeper cares than those arising from their incidental troubles.

The wife he had espoused from the prudential motives which originate the alliances of his countrymen of all degrees, had died too soon after his marriage to leave a painful or lasting impression on his mind. His son, Felix, had been an obedient, early working boy, and was now a warm-hearted, hard-working man; and, as to his orphan neice, Aimee, she was so gentle, so pious, so submissive, and withal so passing pretty, that, in any other atmosphere than that of uneventful and undemonstrative Pierrevau, it might have been accounted wonderful that her uncle seemed to reckon her only as part and parcel of his domestic chattels,—about as necessary to his comfort as his great cherry-wood chair, about as valuable to his sight as the antique Delft porringer gracing his family buffet. But Aimee was scarcely seventeen; and it was not for a year to come that she was to acquire her full importance in his eyes, by becoming the wife of her cousin, Felix; part-proprietress of the cow it was already her duty to milk,—of the six silver spoons and forks bearing the family initials,—of the Delft porringer, cherry-wood chair, and, above all, of a renowned Chaumontel pear-tree, gracing the corner of the cottage garden, and currently whispered in the village to add little less than two hundred francs a-year to Lambert's income. Never, in fact, were seen such pears, so jucy, so shapely, so smooth-skinned, as those of Lambert's tree; and they were accordingly be-

spoken from year to year, by a *patissier* of M——, engaged in commercial dealings with a celebrated *marchand de comestibles* of the Palais Royal.

By some strange perversity, however, it happened that the spirit of restlessness engendered about a score of times in the course of a century in the breast of some less worthy Pierrevalite, became demonstrated, in the present generation, in that of Lambert's pretty niece! It was not that Aimee was dissatisfied with her lot. She had been brought too young to Lambert's cottage to entertain recollections of an earlier stage of existence; and, though the cure had taught her to read, her acquirements were exercised so sparingly, and on such chosen books of devotion, that her little learning had not proved a dangerous thing. She knew little more of the world and its ways than could be gathered from the legends of the elders of the valley, or the disclosures of Besnard the miller, when his lips were opened by the excitement of market-day.

It must have been instinct, therefore, which, stirring the pure current of Aimee's blood, suggested to her that, graceful as was the face of nature on which she was habituated to gaze, art had also amassed an exquisite confusion of graces in a peculiar world of its own; and that, kind and good as was her cousin Felix, a less tuneless voice than his might be moved to whisper words of tenderness in her ear. She saw in the groves and fields things that had no existence for the eye of Felix; she experienced in the brilliancy of the summer sky a sense of exaltation which he knew not of; and, while he called upon her to rejoice in the growth of the beans that were to fatten his hogs, or the excellence of the manure with which he was bedaubing the paddock, Aimee was longing for her labours of the day to end, that she might wander forth to enjoy

> The silence that is in the stary sky—
> The sleep that is between the lonely hills.

Wilder wanderings, happily, she dreamed not of. She knew that her days must begin and end at Pierrevau; and old Lambert was spared the perplexity of listening to aspirations he was so little gifted to comprehend.

Strange rumours were, at length, destined to break in upon this primeval stage of Pierrevallite torpor. Besnard the miller, on returning one evening from market, gave forth an oracular intimation, that a *chemin de fer*, long projected by government, was actually about to be carried through the valley !—

"Bah !" cried Felix; "an *iron* road, indeed ! What are they dreaming of? There is neither iron nor copper in this part of the country."

"It must be some mistake," resumed his father; "Besnard has washed down his *bouilli* with a glass of Macon too much; or 'tis to some other Pierrevau, situated in the mining districts, that his story bears reference."

No ! Besnard was positive; and, on the morrow morning, standing beside his mill-dam, and having tasted nothing more heady for breakfast than a mug of small Burgundy, persisted in the accuracy of his narrative. He even condescended to expound to his wondering auditors, that, according to the explanations vouchsafed him the preceding day, a *chemin de fer* meant neither a road bottomed with iron ore, nor even destined for the exclusive conveyance of that valuable mineral; but a railroad calculated for the acceleration of general transport, and the advantage of commercial dispatch. The Pierrevalites scratched their heads, and tried to understand; when, lo ! in the course of a few days, there arrived at one of the forest-lodges a detachment of government surveyors, engineers, and commissioners; and, from that moment, all was terror and confusion in the district.

Rumour, although, instead of her thousand tongues, she could only put in motion the four hundred indigenous to the place, was not inactive; and it was soon known that hills and houses were to be levelled—dells and gardens filled up-fields and plantations devasted—a bridge thrown over the stream—a road thrown over the bridge;—confusion worse confounded was about to annihilate the valley !—

Some trembled and despaired; some prophesied that changes so preposterous could never be brought to bear during their generation; but a twelvemonth and a day had not ensued from Besnard's first astounding announcement, when they had not only resigned themselves to the impending evil, but to the spectacle of the huge embankment of

earth and mortar, the vast cairns of bricks and stone—nay, even to the tumult occasioned by the cantonment of nearly two thousand workmen in the district. The tranquillity of Pierrevau seemed gone forever! The otter and the plover fled from their tranquil haunts beside the stream; the thrush was heard no longer in the thickets at eventide; the lark forsook the defiled and trampled turf; and, instead of these, there were the curses of angry voices in the air, the threat of authority, the rebuke of the master, the discontent of the labourer, the rattle of carts, the rumble of barrows, the click of trowels, the chipping of brick and stone!—

Even the social order of the place seemed totally reversed. Some of the poorest had been suddenly made rich by the mere accident of the line of road being designated to overthrow their miserable cottages, and occupy their modicum of land; some of the richest, fancied themselves ill-used in the estimate of compensation conceded to them by government, or even by preferences supposed to be evinced in the line selected; and though, in every instance, the value of their property was doubled, all were discontented. Their greatness had been thrust upon them. They fancied, or declared, that they would rather have chosen to retain their pristine and penurious obscurity.

But there was one among the throng of grumblers who, till now so friendly and familiar among his neighbours, maintained on the present occasion a rigid silence; and the world (for Pierrevau had already become a portion of the world), ever ready to judge of human actions in the least favourable point of view, soon settled that Lambert, now the richest of the community, had grown proud as well as wealthy; that, favoured by the partiality of the commissioners, he was ready to side with them against his former associates. For it happened that his whole narrow slip of territory had been comprehended in the railroad; that his house, garden, and paddock, existed no longer; and that the submission or supineness with which he left the measure of his compensation to the sense of justice of the engineers and commissioners, had been instrumental in raising it somewhat above the ordinary level. None perceived that this very supineness proceeded from the extremity of desperate discontent. Lambert possessed enough inborn, untaught phi-

losophy, to know that to wrestle with that mysterious agency called authority, is a fruitless struggle. But so hateful in his eyes was the interpolation of the railroad into his native valley, that he fancied it a matter of indifference to him whether it brought pecuniary gain or loss. One of the station-houses belonging to the road had been appointed, unsolicited, to his use,—a comfortable, well-distributed, stone dwelling-house, with a small adjoining garden; while Felix, his son, had profitably exchanged the condition of husbandman for that of fuel-meter and train-loader. Plenty smiled at their board, and Lambert might have droned away the remainder of his days in idleness, or training Spanish beans over the latticed porch of his new dwelling, without fear of future necessity.

But the old man was too heavy at heart to enjoy even the do-nothingness of competence. The harmony of his days was jarred forever! The thatch under which he was born was trampled under foot; the walls, every crack of which was familiar to his eyes, had no longer an existence; the old oven whose weekly heating had formed an incident in his life, was demolished; the latch he had lifted to enter into his bridal chamber,—to stand beside the cradle of his first-born,—the death-bed of his wife,—was wrenched off and thrown into the rubbish-pit, as an outworn and valueless thing. The very spot upon the brick-floor, whereon for threescore years he had nightly knelt down to worship God, where he had seen his father and his grey-headed grandsire kneel and pray before him, was gone—vanished—forgotten!

A portion of his very existence seemed taken from him. These things were the life of *his* uneventful life, the poetry of his loreless soul, the mementos of youth, which more enlightened men attach to higher objects or public events. It is true, his household goods were now removed to more auspicious shelter. The cherry-tree chair stood beside a chimney with a marble ledge; the enameled Delft porringer was ensconced in a glazed corner-cupboard of ample dimensions; the silver spoons and forks were laid shiningly side by side in a varnished press; the old walnut-wood bed was stationed in a light and airy chamber. But they did not harmonize with their new abode. There was a discrepancy, as between the Grecian peristyle of Greenwich Hospital, or the gilt

dome of the Invalides, and the cells of the wooden-legged veterans crowded beneath. The fitness of things was wanting, even to an indifferent eye. But to the eye of Lambert, how infinitely more! The sense of home, the associations of early years, were there no longer!

It was probably this craving after lost pleasures and habits broken assunder, that drove him forth constantly from his new dwelling, to wander about the neighborhood; selfishly triumphing, as the Pierrevallites imagined, in the spectacle of its busy enlivenment,—of the new buildings arising,—the new speculations springing up,—the new population intruded into its limits. But it was assuredly the coldness of his former associates that soon drove the old man back again to his cheerless home. For Lambert disdained to explain what was really passing in his mind. He saw himself misjudged by those of whose favorable interpretation he had thought himself secure; and scorned to avow that a deeper sentiment than even his home-partiality, had been crushed by the great event. For, within a few months after the commencement of the railroad, Aimee had taken him aside, and declared her fixed determination against becoming the wife of her cousin.

She had given indeed, no explanation of her change of inclinations; yet Lambert could not help connecting it, by some invisible concatenation, with the grand revolution of affairs in the Happy Valley, Though Felix was now fourfold richer than before, the old man felt his own prejudices and partialities so rudely intrenched upon, that he could well believe his pretty niece might have learned to abhor a spot whence rural repose was banished; where she had no cow to tend, or garden flowers and fruit to gather; where she could no longer range in peace among thickets of dogrose and honeysuckle, peeping into the linnet's nest or searching the hollow sycamore trees for the comb of the wild bee. She had pledged herself indeed to her uncle, in declining to become his daughter-in-law, to remain single for his sake; to abide with him and tend him in his old age; a promise inconsistent with any sudden aversion to his place of abode. But that she could have conceived a dislike towards his frank and jovial son, appeared far more inconceivable than a sudden accession of feminine inconsistency.

"Yet, if she knew all," argued Lambert within himself, as he stood watching the distant disappearance of a train along the now active railroad—"if she knew herself to be the child of misery,—the child of shame,—harboured for brotherly-mercy's sake beneath my roof; if she knew that the hovel whose destruction grieves me, had sheltered her mother's tears, and screened her bitter deathbed;—if she knew—if she knew——"

And the old man would clasp his hands over his furrowed forehead, and strive to hide the big rolling tears which Aimee's apostasy had wrung out of his heart! For, neither to neighbor, friend, nor son, had he ever allowed himself to hint the secret of his family dishonor. The effort of his blameless life,—the one great labor,—had been to overcome the pangs thereby created, and conceal the scar engendered by so deep a wound.

Meanwhile, Aimee,—unsuspicious of the extent of her gracelessness towards her uncle, and satisfied to perceive that Felix, after a few weeks' incredulity and a few weeks' amazement, had reconciled himself to his disappointment, and was turning his attention towards the full-blown charms of Clairette, the miller Besnard's daughter,—pursued her customary avocations with a degree of cheerfulness derived from the consciousness of a duty fulfilled. A mountain was removed from her mind. Her assiduities to the old man were unembittered by the apprehension that a time would come when, loathing her husband, even her husband's father might become an object of aversion. She even ceased to repine over the loss of her rural pleasures.

"So long as my uncle survives I have a home," said she to herself, on noticing the probability that Lambert's new residence would shortly find a mistress in the person of a Madame Felix; "and when it pleases heaven to take the good old man to himself, I will not be a burden to my cousin. I will go into service. I have heard that, in her youth, my mother grew weary of Pierrevau, and went into service; and I too will labor for my independence, and die in a home of my own providing."

For Aimee, whose cradle had been her mother's dying bosom, knew not that the poor victim had wandered back to Pierrevau, to lay her head in her native dust; Lambert

having gently checked his niece whenever her inquiries went near to detect the mystery of that earliest blot upon the page of her humble destinies.

One evening, early in the autumn succeeding their establishment at the station-house, Aimee, during the temporary absence of her cousin, who, as usual, had found his way to the mill, was gazing with vexation at the little patch of ground, composed of mortar and rubbish, and inaccessible to vegetation, surrounding their new habitation (so different from the rich, deep, fertile, garden soil of the old cottage, whose carnations and sweetwilliams had been renowned in the country,) when her attention was arrested by the sound of a strange voice; and she perceived a middle-aged traveller leaning from his horse towards the paling, and about to accost her. He had brought an especial letter of reccommendation from the commissioners of the railroad to Pere Lambert, and wished to take up his abode for a few days at the station-house, instead of establishing himself in the noisy little inn recently set up in the valley.

She proceeded, accordingly, to summon her uncle, and put all in order for the reception of the stranger. His horse was turned into the stable, his hat was taken from him, and a thousand welcomes bidden to one who came trebly entitled to hospitality—as a foreigner, an invalid, and the chosen friend of those who had dealt so liberally by Lambert in the disposal of his property. Two circumstances, however, seemed startling to Aimee as connected with the arrival of their unexpected guest; the marked and perplexed interest with which he gazed upon herself, and the puzzled look with which her uncle examined his visitor. The latter peculiarity she expounded by her recollection of the intense dislike nourished by Lambert against the English, to which locomotive nation she every moment expected the stranger would announce himself to belong. The former needed no explanation. It was no new thing to Aimee to find herself an object of attention.

The traveller *was*, in fact an English gentleman of the name of Vernon, who, having passed a considerable portion of his life in India for the acquirement of fortune and disease, now applied his wealth to the assuagement of his maladies by incessant travel. He had traversed, he said, most parts

of the Continent; and, having paused for a few days at M——, and heard much of the scenery of Pierrevau and the wonders of the railroad, obtained letters of recommendation to the keepers of the various station-houses, and quitted his ponderous equipage for the enjoyment of an equestrian tour.

All this was plausible enough. Lambert and his son were of opinion that nothing could be more natural than for the fine scenery of the valley to allure tourists to the spot; and when, on the morrow, Mr. Vernon announced himself so much refreshed by the excellent air of the place,as to be desirous of passing a week or ten days *en pension* with his new hosts, he had so far won upon the old man's feelings that no objection was raised. His proposals were liberal, his manners gentle. His grey hair and wasted cheek begat a sympathy in Lambert's heart; and he was even forgiven the sin of being an Englishman, in favor of his enthusiasm for Pierrevau, and the mild humility of his demeanor. Felix rejoiced that his father should have some one to bear him company, when, at the close of the day's duties, he set off for the mill; and Aimee appeared to find a congenial spirit in the enlightened, far-travelled, deep-read, and patient invalid. Even when the appointed week, ten days fortnight, fixed for his sojourn elapsed, and Mr. Vernon again proposed its prolongation, the request was heard by all with pleasure. He had no vulgar fastidiousness; but, submitting himself to the habits of the place, seemed to make himself one of the family; and, whether it were the the humble philosophy of Lambert that formed the fascination of the circle, or the unobtrusive loveliness of Lambert's niece, certain it was that Monsieur Vernon experienced insuperable difficulties in quitting the spot.

Even Aimee, at the close of three weeks, began to be a little moved by the close attention lavished on her by the stranger. It was not that, for a single moment, he had overstepped the barrier of paternal interest becoming their relative age and position in the world. But why should Mr. Vernon follow her so closely in her walks?—why so closely interrogate her sentiments on all possible subjects? why so labor to acquaint himself with her views and feelings,

unless from cherishing views and feelings of his own, of which she was the leading object?

"You do not appear jealous of your cousin's intention to bring home a bride, Aimee," said he, one day, as they were sauntering together along the shrubby brow of a hill commanding an extensive view of the railroad. "Yet, but a short time ago, scarcely a year, you had made up your mind to become Madame Felix, and assume the direction of his household. How was it that your intentions changed so suddenly?—How was it you could disappoint the projects of your good uncle?"

"*That* you must inquire of those who have already initiated you so far into our family history," replied the young girl, smiling. "But my uncle has surely no reason to be discontented with the change. Clairette Besnard has four thousand crowns for her dowry, and is attached to my cousin Felix. *I* never loved him, otherwise than as a kind relation; and am penniless."

"Nevertheless, I am assured," persisted Vernon, pausing to pluck a tuft of the wild scabious, and offer it to his companion, "that, until last autumn, you evinced no positive repugnance to the marriage arranged for you; and that 'tis not the custom of the damsels of these cantons to exercise a choice in such matters."

"It may be so," replied Aimee, almost petulantly. "But my uncle is satisfied, my cousin is satisfied, I am satisfied, and what matters it that the gossips, our neighbours, find fault with me?"—And, as she pushed her way somewhat briskly along the hill in order to escape further catechization, she could not help suspecting that some busy intermeddler had been talking to her new friend of a certain Monsieur Clement (the young engineer originally despatched into the valley by the projectors of the railroad,) who had been a singularly frequent guest at Lambert's cottage, but who, from the period of the completion of his survey, had been heard of no more at Pierrevau. For even her uncle was secretly inclined to trace the sudden change in Aimee's disposition to the influence of this transient acquaintance. It was not till Monsieur Clement's arrival, she had ever seemed conscious of an incompatibility between her own character and that of her cousin; nor was it till six months after his departure,

that she had declared her intention of passing the remainder of her days in single blessedness.

Yet, notwithstanding her jealous conjecture, neither Lambert, nor Felix, nor the Besnard family, nor any other officious Pierrevallite, had ever referred, directly, or indirectly, to the young engineer, in conversing with the English invalid. Where, then, could he have gathered his information?—or were his inuendoes only the result of chance?

Her uncle, meanwhile, watched with some uneasiness the growing familiarity between his inmate and his niece. It was not that there was anything dangerously seductive in the outward man of the valetudinarian. But Lambert had good sense enough to feel that habitual intercourse with the polished and educated, was not likely to inspire his niece with a taste for the society of those of her own condition in life; and to fear that, in two months' intimacy with young Clement had decided her that she could not hope for happiness in perpetual companionship with her illiterate cousin, the conversation of the more refined Vernon was likely to complete the mischief. So strong, however, was his confidence in the excellences of his mild and melancholy guest, that he resolved to make known his fears, and appeal to his own sense of justice on the subject.

"Do not alarm yourself, my good friend," was the frank Englishman's reply to this singular avowal. "Nothing is less likely than that I should acquire over Aimee's mind the species of influence which you seem to think has been already perniciously exercised. But this I promise you; that if, at the expiration of another month's sojourn in your family,—a month of unmolested intercourre with your neice, she should admit her feelings to be touched in my favor, I will instantly make her my wife. I am rich,—unencumbered; nay, do not break forth into declarations of disinterestedness or professions of gratitude; for, believe me, nothing is more improbable than such a contingency.—I have strong reasons for what I advance."

This honorable engagement, notwithstanding the disclaimer by which it was qualified, tended at least to open the heart and mind of Lambert towards his guest,—the guest who thus identified himself with his family interests.

"I can scarce make out!"—the old man would say, as

they sat together under one of the spreading sycamores of the valley, flourishing so near the banks of the mill-stream as to have escaped the invasion of the railroad—"I can scarcely yet explain to myself how you, sir, who belong to a nation I abhor, and have a right to abhor, have won so warmly on my esteem. It sometimes seems to me that I am fated in my latter age to lay aside all the natural likings and dislikings of my youth. All I loved as a boy is rooted up—past—forgotten—as though it had never existed. No trace remains of the home of my forefathers. There was an old pear-tree stood beside it, sir. Will you believe it that I,—a grown man,—and elder,—am sometimes inclined to sit down and weep that it should have been cut down and burned in the fire?—The railroad people paid me twice the value of the tree; for my neighbors were ready to stand forward and attest how fine was the fruit, and how sure of purchase; and there is a seedling of the old stock in my friend Besnard's garden. But will the price paid me, or four times as much, bring back to my old heart the thoughts and feelings that came thronging upon me as I sat under its green branches and thought of the time when, as a breechless urchin, I listened to my father and mother computing their expected gains from its produce, when the white blossoms were just bursting from the bough, showering new youth, as it were, upon the gnarled and hoary branches? How fondly they proposed, if the summer season proved prosperous and the fruit abundant, to give such and such comforts to the children, or make such and such provisions for the coming winter! I had a sister, sir, (I shall gain courage to speak more fully of her hereafter), a young, fair sister. I was nearly fourteen when she was born, and she was almost as a child to me. How well do I remember fondling her an infant, in my arms, under that old pear tree; and afterwards reproving her, when I could fix her attention and draw her aside under its shadow unobserved by her parents, when she grew up into a wild, gay girl, and my poor wife admonished me that Anna sadly needed chiding!"

Vernon gave an involuntary start, and uttered a scarcely conscious sigh, as Lambert proceeded in his monologue.

"And now, the cursed railroad, which seems to have made me rich only to make me lonesome, runs where that

pear-tree stood! The spring-tide comes, and I no longer see its white blossoms trembling bride-like in the breeze; and no cool, green, glossy shade quivers in summer beside my door, to allure me forth into the freshness, where I may sit meditating upon the mercies and greatness of God! I seem to have lost my only remaining friend, sir, in that old tree!"

"You forget your son," remonstrated Vernon.

"No! I do not forget him—I should deserve that God might forget *me* were I so ungrateful," replied the old peasant. "But for years and years, it was my darling hope that he would be brought nearer as it were to my affections, by marrying with all that remained to me of my precious Anna, my sweet sister; and giving me grandchildren that might wear her look, and bear her name, and renew round my declining years the recollections that are almost beginning to fade from my mind. But Aimee's obstinacy decreed it otherwise; and I have had too fatal a warning in my time, to try to subdue by opposition the working of a woman's will. And now, Felix is about to bring home a stranger to take Aimee's place, and be to me as a daughter. Clairette is a good girl, I believe, but she is quick, loud, prone to noisy junketing, very different from my soft, peaceful-hearted niece; and I cannot reconcile myself to the change. And should what you have spoken of come to pass, should the poor girl, in spite of the difference of age betwixt you, really evince a preference so as to induce you to make her your wife, think, sir, think of all I should lose! You will remove her from Pierrevau—from France; will make a lady of her, will perhaps render her even ashamed of per parentage and kindred; and I shall become hopeless and helpless in my old age! Better for me to give up the ghost upon her wedding day!" And again the old man wrung his hands, and wept bitterly.

"Make your mind easy, worthy friend," exclaimed Vernon, entering warmly into his feelings. "I, at least, shall never be instrumental in the disunion you anticipate. Nay! why should I not repay your confidence by equal candour? Why not avow, at once, that to become the husband of your niece has never entered into my calculations? Although *you* have not named him, I can scarcely fancy you have forgotten the existence of Clement, the engineer, your

guest last season? That youth, my good Lambert, is very dear to me. I know that, during his visit to Pierrevau, he attached himself to your niece; but that, dependent upon me for his means of subsistence, he made no attempt to engage her affections in return. He persuaded himself that I should not be moved to consent to his union with a peasant's child; nor was it till very lately, in noticing a painful alteration in his health and spirits, I obtained from my young friend an avowal of his attachment. From that moment, I did not hesitate. Resolved to ascertain by personal observation the worthiness of its object ere I sanctioned the sacrifice of higher prospects, I came hither to judge for myself. I saw in Aimee all that was endearing and attractive; and the honesty with which, in rejecting this very morning the offer of my own hand and fortune (tendered as a touchstone of her affections for—for my—my *protege*), she admitted her previous attachment, and even—generous girl! explicitly named its object, has determined me in her favour. Let the young couple be happy together. To Clement I will secure a liberal independence, enabling him to cultivate his profession for the benefit of his future family, rather than from present necessity. The Chateau de Massignac, between M—— and Pierrevau, is on sale, and may be purchased to afford them a summer house within reach of Aimee's kind uncle. *There*, my good Lambert, you and I will meet together every future summer, and find some auspicious substitute for the old pear-tree, and a solace for former afflictions."

Vernon held out his hand cordially as he spoke; but Lambert, absorbed in reflection, neglected to accept the pledge.

"You have not yet explained your intentions to my niece?" faltered he, with blanched cheeks, while the dew of perturbation rose on his withered temples.

"Not yet."

"Thank Heaven!"

"Why thank Heaven! I have taken my determination deliberately, and am not likely to repent. To-morrow, in your own presence, I will disclose all to Aimee."

"Would it were likely!" murmured poor Lambert. "But noble as are your views, they cannot be brought to pass.

There exist obstacles rendering such a marriage impossible."

"I heartily hope not!" cried the Englishman, almost beginning to share the emotion of his companion. "My heart is set upon it."

"Would it be still set on the marriage," inquired Lambert, in a scarcely audible voice, "if you learned that my innocent niece was the offspring of guilt? If, instead of being the child of honest peasant parents, a parentage to which you adverted just now as a more than sufficient stigma, you were to find her the daughter, the illegitimate daughter, of a scoundrel? No! you would *not!* I read her condemnation in your silence! It is only I, her uncle, the brother of the victim, who could take the poor girl to my heart, and deal towards her as if she were the descendant of princes!"

"You are mistaken," was the Englishman's mild rejoinder. "My hesitation proceeded from no such motive. *I* too, on the contrary, have my painful confessions to make. Clement also is a natural son."

A ray of joy illumined the countenance of Lambert. "That I should rejoice in such a thing!" cried he. "Yet all is for the best! Heaven, in this matter, has ministered directly for our happiness. But it is fit that you should know more, sir, should know all, ere you pledge yourself definitively to the performance of your promises.

"Monsieur Vernon, I have already expressed to you the warmth of my affection for that young sister who might almost have passed for a daughter of my own. Nor was poor Anna less preciously dear to her parents. She was the child of their old age, as it were, the child almost of their dotage; so that they neglected to check, in the disposition of their darling, such indications of willfulness as, at a more rational epoch of life, would not have been suffered to expand to her destruction. My own wife was the first to point out to me that Anna's perversity might, at some miserable moment, tend to her destruction; and when, a year or two after my marriage (which was an arrangement concluded by my parents), my friend Besnard proposed to become the husband of our pretty Anna, and, suitable as such a match would have been for her, she positively and tenaciously refused her consent, I began to see that my poor woman was in the right; and that among us all, we had been

guilty of ruining the poor girl's disposition, by pernicious indulgence. For no sooner did Anna perceive that my father was bent on making her the wife of our neighbour the miller, than off she went at once from Pierrevau! She had unfortunately money enough in her savings' purse to command the means of escape; and, leaving a few lines in her chamber to acquaint us that she had made up her mind to work out an honest independence rather than become a burthen to her family, or the wife of a man who was the object of her aversion, she disappeared from the place!—

"What a day it was in the old cottage when Anna was missed! She was but sixteen years of age, the favourite, the idol, the darling of all our hearts and eyes! And to show so little care for us! You may guess that it was a sore trial! From my grey-headed grandfather to little Felix, then a prattling infant, all wept for her, all pined after her. One minute, my father and mother swore to banish her forever from their affections, and her very name was to be named among us no more; the next, they would have been glad to kneel down and kiss the dust under her feet, had she crossed the threshold of the cottage.

"But, alas! she put not our tenderness to the trial. She came no more. While all was grief and lamentation under her father's roof, Anna, it seems, arrived in safety in the great city, of which during his courtship Besnard had been so fond of boasting to her; and her beauty, youth, and artlessness availed to place her, without further recommendation, in a *magazin* in Paris; one of those embroidery-shops for ladies' work, where a forewoman of attractive appearance is so valuable an acquisition. It was from thence sir, she wrote to acquaint her parents that she was well, safe, happy, and in a way towards the accomplishment of her desires; satisfied that she had done wisely in avoiding, by an extreme measure, a marriage which must have ended in misery.

"My father and mother began to reconcile themselves to her absence, seeing that she seemed to speak so reasonably, and to have placed herself under such respectable protection; and even when, six months afterwards, she wrote a second time, informing us she had been persuaded to accept the situation of waiting-maid in an English family of distinc-

tion, the privacy of which she preferred to the fatigue and exposure of a shop, it was only the idea of menial servitude in our family which grieved us for Anna's sake. But you seem indisposed, sir," continued Lambert, checking himself, —"You look pale,—faint. Let us return to the house, and I can conclude my melancholy story when you are more disposed to listen."

"No," replied Vernon, averting his head—"I cannot be more disposed to listen than now. My interest is only too painfully excited."

"Just at that period," resumed Lambert, "my whole attention was absorbed by the decay and death of my poor wife; and, about a year after her decease, the boy she had left me fell into a grievous fever; so that, with family cares of one kind or other, I had scarcely leisure to become anxious, when my mother sometimes reminded me that Anna had ceased to write; that, travelling with English heretics, she had perhaps ceased to take thought of Pierrevau and her family; and that something must surely be amiss. But at length, one chilly spring evening (I remember it, alas! as a thing of yesterday,) I was returning from the mill whither I had been to consult Besnard's new wife touching the sickness of my son; when as I turned across the fields from the stream towards our old cottage, methought I heard a voice calling upon my name.

"The sound was at once faint and shrill; but it seemed to say—'Lamebrt—Lambert!' in a tone that brought the blood up to my very temples; so familiar it was, and yet so strange. For a moment I was superstitious enough to think of my poor wife, who was dead and gone; for I discovered the glimmering of a white figure beneath the hazel bushes near the river, and fancied the poor soul could not rest in her grave, but was come forth to greet me by the way with counsel for the sake of the child who had been so dear to her. Nay, I could scarcely find breath to answer, till the faint voice called upon me again—'Lambert—Lambert!' and in a moment the recollection of my dear little sister rushed upon my mind!—'Anna is surely dead in some foreign country,' I thought, 'and behold her spirit has wandered home!'—for no one could have dreamed that the voice, or the being who soon stood beside me, belonged to

human life and breath. But, when her tears fell on my cheek, and her bosom heaved upon mine, and she whispered, 'My brother—a poor broken-hearted creature is come home to die at your feet!' then I knew that it was indeed my living sister I held in my arms; and that the world had gone sorely with one whose childhood had been so happy, and whose youth so cherished!

"And so we sat down together in the twilight upon a green bank; and I dared not even give vent to the grieved and angry feelings with which I listened to the poor girl's wrongs and sufferings; for so afflicted and so exhausted was she, that I feared every moment might prove her last. Anna was about to become a mother, sir, and her child was the child of misery;—yea, even the child whom you have destined to become the wife of one whom I cannot but suppose your son." And Lambert groaned aloud, and hid his face with his hands, ere he proceeded; nor was it till the Englishman, grasped his arms with energy, implored him to continue his recital, that he found words for the details of his family disgrace.

"Her first prayer to me was to conceal her arrival for a time from the knowledge of her parents, till I had found occasion to divulge, at least to her mother, the grievous motives of her return. So we lingered and lingered among the thickets till nightfall; and, when all was stillness and sleep in the old cottage, she crept in, like a guilty thing; and it was in my poor wife's chamber (which for a year past had been closed up from use) that I laid the wanderer down to rest. And truly she needed rest; for a sorer sight of weariness and want, and woe, never presented itself, than when I unclasped her mantle, and laid aside her head-gear, and looked face to face upon her who three years before, had been the boast and pride of Pierrevau!

Next day, I had no difficulty in conveying food to the room; and began to hope I should find time to break the matter by degrees to the old people, ere the worst came to pass. But it might not be. The agitation of finding herself a shamed and miserable outcast under the roof she had left in her willfulness,—pure, stainless, uncontaminated,—proved too much for my poor sister. The pangs of travail came hurriedly on; and anxiously as I contrived to pro-

cure her matron aid from the village, and careful as she was, in the extremity of her anguish, to suppress every moan, every murmur that might betray her to the inmates of the cottage,—my mother's suspicions became directed towards the deserted chamber. However unjustifiable her opinion that I could be tempted to dishonor the home of my father, —the deathbed of my wife,—by a scene of infamy, began to entertain a mistrust of misdoings, which induced her to steal up after me into the chamber, and ascertain what was going on.

"What a scene to meet a mother's eye! When the poor woman softly stole into what she had rashly judged to be the chamber of dalliance, there—faint, pallid, death-stricken,—a wretched infant wailing by her side,—lay the darling of her age;—even as yet scarcely more than a child, but already lost—already doomed to the dust! In a moment my mother lay insensible on the threshhold; and, ere I found strength to bear her from the room, my father, roused by the noise, tottered there in his turn, to bestow his malediction on a head whereon he had so long been accustomed to lavish blessings!"

Vernon wiped the cold dew from his forehead, but remained silent.

"Judge, sir, of the care it cost me," at length resumed his companion, "to subdue the rage of one, to pacify the anguish of the other, and, above all, to raise and cheer the spirits of the sinking, *dying* woman! It was already too late to hope for Anna's survival; but it would have been too much to feel that she expired under her father's curse,—her mother's reprobation. For, after all, sir, she was our own still; our flesh, our blood, our once loved nursling, whom we had petted and nurtured into folly; nay, and still uncontaminated, as you may judge by listening to the avowals which, during the few days she was yet spared, she confided to the ear of her brother.

"The people by whom she had been persuaded to quit her way of life were of first-rate family and fortune, even in that strange country of England, where money and consequence appear so plentiful. The father had been one of the king's ministers; and having resigned his place in a fit of testiness, was travelling on the Continent to conceal his

own discomfiture, but on pretence of completing the education of his daughters, whom he suffered to run wild as they listed—all for wantonness, all for sport, all for pleasure—so that they interfered not with his graver avocations. But there was, unluckily, a brother too,—a brother whom the old lord saw fit to make the companion of his travels, in order that his daughters might not require from himself the attendance and protection which apparently they so much needed. This Edward (Anna on her deathbed named him only as her Edward) was not destined to succeed to the wealth and titles of his father. In your country it seems there exists among the great that scandalous preference for the first-born son, which creates a few vast estates and an unreckonable diffusion of misery; and Edward was destined to repair the injury inflicted upon him by his parents by exile to a far off Indian country—a place, I think called Ceylon—among heathens and beasts of prey. By way, I suppose, of reconciling the young man to his future alienation, he was the one selected by his father to accompany the family in wandering about the rich, fertile, and happy plains of France! The others were pursuing their education at home: some to gain a livelihood by becoming priests, some soldiers, some even laywers,—so strange are your English notions of nobleness and dignity!—

"All this was gradually confided by the young man to the unfortunate girl whom his giddy sisters had selected as a favorite, and of whom they soon took no further note than as a menial paid to do their bidding, and pretty enough to do honor to their service; while Edward was only too glad to find an ear to listen to him, and an eye to look kindly on him, when he expressed his apprehensions of approaching banishment. He was ever loitering at home with Anna, instead of accompanying his sisters to their favorite scenes of dissipation; till, irritated by his negligence, the young ladies opened their eyes to the fact that their brother was too young, their favorite attendant too fair, to be left together with impunity. But, instead of doing justice to themselves and Ann by instant dismissal, these spoiled children of fortune sealed the impending evil by dealing harshly with their *protege*. They taunted, reprehended, nay, overwhelmed my poor sister with their scorn—(for,

after all, what was she but their waiting-maid?)—till Edward fancied it incumbent on him to comfort the poor, weeping, mortified girl. In short, sir (for why delay the sequel?) Anna, while dreaming of becoming the young man's wife, and sailing with him for that eastern country of which he began to speak in raptures the moment he indulged a hope of her companionship, became in the first instance *his mistress;* and, when the rash caresses of the boy-lover accelerated the discovery of his secret, but one of the two was fated to pay the penalty of their mutual fault.

The girl—'the good-for-nothing foreigner'—was turned out characterless, destitute, despairing; while his son was dispatched to England, on his way to the East, under the care of a clergyman, a friend of the family; the old Lord laughing heartily, and scarcely aside, at the notion that his favorite son had so early distinguished himself as a seducer.

"Such is the world, sir! Events that bring with them shame, heart-break, death, eternal punishment, are jested upon by many as exploits deserving indulgence—perhaps applause; and while Anna, after concealing her miseries till the sad hour approached too nearly to be trifled with, wandered home to die,—to convey disgrace to an honest man's homestead, and despair to her wretched parents,—Edward proceeded triumphantly to his distant home, priding himself on the ruin he had achieved, and——"

"No, no, no!—you wrong him grievously!" exclaimed Vernon, no longer able to repress his emotions. "All that he *could* attempt he did. Subjected to the strictest control by the guardian imposed upon me by my father, I wrote in every direction where I imagined that my poor Anna might have sought a retreat. I wrote again, and again, and again, and still no answer. Vain were my remonstrances, my tears. I was shipped off, under the influence of my father's authority, for Ceylon—banished beyond all hope of return. But believe me that, from the miserable hour we were torn asunder, my hopes, my thoughts were with *her*. I had no ambition but to secure a competence, return to Europe, make her my wife, and sacrifice every more aspiring project to her happiness."

"*You!*"—exclaimed Lambert, starting from Vernon's side

as from contact with some venomous reptile—"*you?* Are *you*, then, the seducer—*you* the destroyer; the man who bore down my sister's young head to the dust, and brought my father's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave?—*You?*"—

And Vernon could only avert his face, and tacitly admit his guiltiness.

"And your poor deserted child!—cried Lambert again,—"she whom, for her mother's sake, I have reared so tenderly, and of whom, for all these years, her wretched father demeaned himself not so far as to inquire!—the *waiting woman's child*—the——"

"Again I say you wrong me!" remonstrated Vernon, but in a tone of gentlest and most unresenting humanity. "All that I at first promised myself I strictly fulfilled, and thereby lurks a mystery which must be instantly sought out and elucidated.—Finding it impossible to gain a clue to Anna's place of shelter, I resigned myself as I might, to the duty of conquering an independence to enable me to return to my native country,—visit France.—and prosecute my inquiries in person.—Instead of fulfilling my father's intentions by remaining in the East for the acquirement of a collossal fortune to impart lustre to a younger branch of the Vernon family, I contented myself with a third of the provision specified as indispensable to the dignity of my name, and returned in haste to Europe.

"Brief was my stay in my native country. In my own home I found all desolate. My father had expired during my passage; my elder brother, his successor, united in marriage with one of the haughtiest daughters of the aristocracy, received me almost as a stranger; my sisters were brilliantly established and presiding over scattered households of their own; my brothers were dispersed by the interest of their several professions. The mighty bond of family affection, in humble life so powerful and so consolatory, was wanting in the house of Vernon; and, instead of reuniting from time to time, to compare mutually the brightness or blackness of their scroll of destinies, my brothers and sisters met no more, or met only amid the tumultuous pageantry of the great world. From all this heartlessness I turned away. In eager hope I turned to France, where I trusted that my

affianced wife might still survive, to realize a far warmer dream of human happiness. I visited Paris,—I consulted the records of the police,—I advertised in all the papers; but, alas! no Anna replied.—I examined every source of information, Lambert, but could gain no intelligence of your sister!—

"Driven to despair, I thought, at length, of visiting the *bourgeoise* from whose *magazin* my sisters had, in the first instance, withdrawn the unfortunate girl; and, after some demur, Madame Remond informed me that my repentance came too late,—that Anna had expired in giving birth to her child.

"'But that child, at least, survives?" was my first eager interrogation, on recovering the shock conveyed by this intelligence. And my informant not only replied in the affirmative, but that the little boy had ever since remained under her protection. On the following day, Clement was clasped in my arms, and acknowledged as my son!"

"Vile imposture!" exclaimed Lambert with indignation. "From the moment Anna quitted that woman's roof, no communication had passed between them."

"Your narrative has convinced me," replied the Englishman, "that my over-eagerness has rendered me the dupe of villany. The boy to whom they saw me so willing to extend my heart and fortune, was doubtless some indigent relative of the Remonds,—a nephew or grandson,—for whom they thought it worth while to secure the advantages profferred by my inconsiderate frankness. I have reared him as my own, loved him as my own, loved him even with a wisdom of love enabling me to surmount the doting impulses of my heart. Instead of holding forth to my son prospects of a brilliant independence, I have given him a profession, instilled into his mind the love of occupation, and stimulated him to the exercise of his own brilliant abilities. Clement has fortunately already distinguished himself in a distinguished career; thrice fortunate for him now,—when I must learn to withdraw from him, not only the tender affection of which he has been the object, but the prospects of opulence to which another possesses a legitimate claim."

"To estrange your affections, wholly and at once, from one who has been unto you as a son," observed Lambert,

"would be an afflicting effort. Since it is your intention to make my niece his wife, why not remove all difficulties by persisting in your project of uniting the young people?"

"Such a scheme requires deliberation." rejoined Mr. Vernon. "I do not, for an instant, implicate my boy (still I must call him so!) in the iniquities of his relatives; but I must search out the mystery—perhaps expose, perhaps chastise, the offence. Nor am I altogether certain of the present state of my daughter's affections."

"On that point," interrupted Lambert, "entertain no further doubt. Now that I am enabled to connect together the events of the last eighteen months, I perceive that an attachment for Clement was the sole origin of all that has struck me as inconsistent in her conduct."

It was from the lips of his acknowledged daughter—the child of his beloved Anna—clasped within his arms and weeping on his bosom, that Mr. Vernon obtained confirmation of an opinion which seemed to remove every obstacle to his happiness. Before he proceeded to summon the young engineer to Pierrevau, he visited Paris; and, after giving vent to his just indignation at the imposture by which he had been defrauded, succeeded in obtaining from Madame Remond a confession that the child she had basely imposed upon him, was the orphan of her own daughter;—a destitute boy, in whose favor she had been unable to resist the temptation of appropriating those benefits promised by the lover of Anna.

Nor does it appear that the resentment of Mr. Vernon was harshly prolonged; for six months had not elapsed from the period of his explanation with Lambert, when the young couple were settled at the Chateau de Massignac under the protection of their father and friend, with the grey-headed brother of Anna as their guest.

Felix, as the happy husband of Clairette, was already installed as lord and master of the station-house of the railroad, of which Clement had been appointed chief engineer; and Lambert rejoiced to quit Pierrevau,—busy, bustling Pierrevau,—and, seated with the hypocrandic Vernon in some shady recess of the gardens of Massignac, moralise over the past,—over the vicissitudes and troubles of human life,—the lights and shades of human affection,—the pros-

pects of a better world, a purer state of being; or, reverting from generalities to the details of their especial fortune, return thanks to Heaven for the singular providence which had guided Vernon to the grave of his Anna, and the abode of his long-alienated child, by engaging the professional labors of his suppositious son in the construction of the RAILROAD.

# THE MARINERS OF THE POLLET.

CLOSELY adjoining the town of Dieppe in Normnady is a suburb called the Pollet, which, though divided from it by the estuary of a river scarcely a quarter the width of the Thames, differs as completely from the parent town in manners and customs, dialect and costume, as the capital of England from that of Spain.

The Pollet is supposed by historians to have been colonised by the crews of vessels from some Mediterranean port ;* the dialect of the Polletais, or Poltais, containing a number of Italian words, and resembling in idiom and pronunciation that of the Lazzaroni of Naples rather than the French language. Their original costume, also, is strictly Italian ; and their bigoted superstition savors of Italian origin ; while the barcarolles with which the mariners mark the measure of their oars as the fishing boats are rowed back into the harbour, might almost be mistaken for those of Venice ; the letter *j* and *g* being pronounced by the Poltais as by the Venetians,—*z*.

The peculiarities of the tribe, thus strangely isolated, can of course have been preserved, through succeeding ages, only by force of strong prejudice and extreme superstition.

* In the letters patent, by which, in 1283, Philip III ceded to the Archbishop of Rouen his crown lands in the Pollet, the place is styled "*Villa de Poleto.*"

It was inculcated as a matter of religious observance among them from sire to son, that a Poltais must match with a Poltaise, and that any deviation of costume was an offence against the community. Though a Poltais family might cross the harbor on the Sabbath to perform its devotions in the noble church of St. Remy, or the cathedral of St. Jaques (the patron of the fishermen, of which the population of the Pollet is entirely composed,) yet, on occasions of such family celebrations as marriages or baptisms, they never failed to solemnize their rites in their own humble chapel of Notre Dame des Greves—a temple which might pass, belfry and all, through the porch of either of the Dieppois churches without bowing its head. If at times the town of Dieppe have arrived at high prosperity, and distinguished itself in the annals of the country, the Pollet has neither condescended to ape its fashions nor to court, reflected from its face a ray of royal sunshine or civic advancement. Mansions of considerable dignity have arisen in Dieppe, worthy to afford shelter to Napoleon and the Duchesse de Berri in their successive days of triumph. But the Pollet contains not a single house of mark; remaining composed (as in the days of the bombardment of Dieppe by the English in 1694) of a few narrow streets, inhabited by mariners and their families, and the petty tradesmen requisite to supply their wants. An ancient convent converted into a barrack, and a modern prison and house of correction, are the only buildings of consequence in the little suburb of the Pollet; which is comprised between the mouth of the harbor and the base of the chalky cliffs overlooking the junction of the river Dieppe with the sea.

Within a few years, indeed, the connexion between the town and suburb has been drawn closer by the construction of a *passerelle* or floating bridge, facilitating the intercourse of their respective inhabitants, long interrupted by the ruinous state of the ancient bridge of the Pollet. But till the middle of the last century, the differences between the Poltais and Dieppis amounted almost to the feudes of rival factions. The former appear, indeed, to partake of the fiery particles of those Castilian children of the sun from whom they are supposed by many to have their origin; while, as and instance of the violence of their opinions and

doggedness of their obstinacy, it is related that D'Aubigne, Archbishop of Rouen, coming to preach at the church of St. Remy in Dieppe, after having suspended from his duties one of the vicars of the Pollet suspected of inclining towards the reformed church, the Poltais, not choosing to be confessed by any but their favorite priest, proceeded in a body to the church, clambered up the rails of the chancel, and, with vehement threats and imprecations, drove the Archbishop from the celebration of the mass into the sacristy. In the sequel, the prelate was compelled to restore the officiating vicar to his office, having departed furtively from the town in the dread that the contumacious Poltais might execute the threat of seizing the Archbishop and flinging him into the harbor over the bridge of the Pollet, which he must traverse in order to proceed to his visitations in Normandy.

About the year 1800, a small house in the Grande Rue of this curious suburb was in the possession of a family of the name of Crosnier, by one of whose forefathers it was constructed nearly two centuries before. Pierre Crosnier, the father, was accounted in his neighborhood a wealthy man; being proprietor, not only of the aforesaid solid dwelling house of stone, consisting of two stories and a *grenier*, but of a fishing-smack, known by the name of the Belle Gabrielle, esteemed the best weatherboat belonging to the port of Dieppe. The Crosniers were, in fact, a prosperous generation. It was recorded that the dwelling in the Pollet, having been completed scarcely twelve months before the great bombardment by which the town was destroyed and the principal inhabitants deprived of shelter, was hired at a high price by one of the notables as a refuge for his family during the reconstruction of his own; and that, on quitting it two years afterwards to take possession of his new residence in the Rue de l'Epee, the tenant marked his satisfaction towards his host by endowing him with the household furniture wherewith he had replenished his abode. This might account for Crosnier's possession of two richly-carved *armoires*, or cupboards of oak, and two old-fashioned beds of walnut wood, with a set of high-backed chairs and cumbrous tables to match; which, together with a huge screen of guilt leather gracing the parlor, still commanded the ad-

miration of the Pollet. But we must look to more recent sources of prosperity as the origin of the prodigious supply of household linen filling the *armoires* in question; to say nothing of the twelve clumsy *couverts d'argent*, and soup-ladle and coffee-spoons of the same material, which distinguished the board of Jacques Crosnier from those of his less wealthy brother mariners. The family was not only well to do in the world, but appeared uniformly prospered by the same good luck. It was calculated in the harbor that finer turbots were despatched to the Paris market by the owner of the Belle Gabrelle than by all the other fisherman of the Pollet; and the first haul of mackerel for the season, and first freight of herrings, was sure to reach the port from the nets of Pierre Crosnier.

The fisherman's family consisted of two sons; the elder, Jacques, being named after the holy patron of his calling, and the younger, Maxime, after his grandfather. His helpmate was a jolly soul, some four feet in circumference, whose ruddy brown complexion and comely countenance proclaimed that in her earlier days she had shared the toils of her husband, exposed to the scorching sun as retailer of his wares in the fish market. But Madame Crosnier enjoyed a distinction far beyond that conferred by her comely face, or the rich garniture of Valenciennes lace in which it was enveloped, or even by her rights as wife to a thriving house and ship holder. Madame Crosnier was, according to continental phrase, "*nee Pierette Bouzard*," being daughter, sister, and aunt to those three remarkable mariners of Dieppe, who having, as pilots of the port, preserved from shipwreck and other maritime disasters more lives than the Hotel Dieu has saved by its medicaments, were honoured by Napoleon with golden medals, commemorating their prowess, and the free gift of a substantial dwelling-house, erected on the jetty for their hereditary use, and bearing the inscription, "*Don de la Patrie!*"—

The brother of Pierrette had even appeared at the Court of Louis XVI to receive from the hands of Marie Antoinette the cross of St. Louis as a reward for his services; and on his return from this visit to Versailles, honoured with the title of "*le brave homme*" by his royal hosts and their courtiers, Bouzard had undertaken the part of sponsorship

for little Maxime Crosnier, now a flourishing lad of twenty-one.

On account, perhaps, of this auspicious circumstance, Maxime became a sort of pet in the family. It is true the boy bad fair to emulate the renown of his maternal kinsfolk, having distinguished himself by exploits of courage and address in the harbour, at an age when most youngsters are clinging to their mother's apron-strings. But Maxime, in his blue woollen jacket and woollen cap, and trousers of coarse canvass, was seen one moment clinging to the main-top of some Norwegian sloop, and the next diving to the bottom after some object flung overboard by the crew as an incentive to his attempts, till his adventurous spirit rendered him as great a favourite with the sailors of the Pollet, and the crews of the foreign merchantmen trading with Dieppe, as with his own parents.

The high spirit of Maxime was rendered more apparent by the inertness and taciturnity of his elder brother. Jacques Crosnier, though bred amid the perils and pastimes of seafaring men, displayed a natural distaste for his father's vocation, which grew with his increasing years. Old Bouzard, apprehensive, perhaps, that his grandson might in some case of emergency evince a want of hardihood discreditable to the family, at length backed the boy's entreaties to his father to be allowed to settle to some sedentary trade; and, after innumerable family dissensions, Jacques was apprenticed to an ivory-carver (a trade which for three centuries has afforded a monopoly to Dieppe, where, early in the sixteenth, it originated in the trade of the Dieppois with the gold coast, of which they were the first discoverers.

In his new calling the sober youth displayed capacities for which he obtained little credit among his relations. A hardy, blustering race, they had no patience to see a fine likely lad weary out his days at a turning-lathe, or in scraping with a file at a slender piece of ivory, to form spillikens for the toyshops.

Even when, at the expiration of five years' close attention to his business, Jacques Crosnier was enabled to present to his mother, on her fete day, one of those full-rigged miniature frigates in ivory which constitute the *chef d'œuvres* of the trade, together with two exquisitely carved figures of

our Lady and her patron Saint Peter, with his keys, to form a suite of ornaments for the mantel-piece of her state parlour, the jolly dame could not help attaching more value to the branches of coral and glossy shells brought home by Maxime from his first voyage to the West Indies, than to the elaborate productions of her more gifted first-born. Maxime, with his fine frank countenance and hearty disposition, still remained the favourite child.

Maxime, meanwhile, devoted to his brother the strongest affections of a warm and loving heart. Though the partiality injudiciously betrayed by their parents might afford some slight pretext for the envy and jealousy of the elder brother, it should have been disarmed by the generosity with which Maxime, disdaining to profit by his influence, seized every occasion of displaying to advantage the talents and industry of Jacques, and bringing forward to the notice of the family his claims and deserts; still, Maxime enjoyed the Benjamin's portion. It was Maxime whom the old folks called to their side when, on Sundays or fete days, the family proceeded together to dance at the *guinguettes* of Jawval or Martin l'Eglise. It was Maxime's head on which, in childhood, they had been apt to bestow their first benediction; and it was Maxime's hand which, in dawning manhood, they sought as their support whenever there was rough work to be done, or a rough step to be overpassed.

Though strongly attached to the calling of his forefathers, Maxime's adventurous spirit could not long rest contented with the monotonous life of a Dieppe fisherman. Having succeeded in persuading his father that his place as simple mariner of the Belle Gabrielle might be easily filled up, he obtained permission to embark on board a lugger freighted for Havre, whence it was easy to work a passage to the West Indies, with a view of improving his maritime experience, and seeing something of the world. From the West Indies, Maxime Crosnier proceeded to New York; and previous to his return to his native town, he had obtained such high testimonials for steadiness and good conduct, that two of the principal merchants of Dieppe, engaged in the north-western trade, contended to obtain his services at a higher rate of remuneration than had ever yet been offered on the quays of Dieppe. By the liberality of his father the

same sum of money which had been advanced for the setting up in business of Jacques, was now bestowed upon him to invest in ventures presenting themselves in the course of his voyages; and the young man took leave of his parents for the second time in exuberant spirits, arising at once from his own happy prospects and the prosperous position of his brother.

For Maxime had successfully exerted his influence with his parents to obtain their sanction to the marriage of their elder son, whose *ateliers* as an *ivoirier* were established in the house adjoining their own in the Pollet; and though the young person to whom he had united himself was come of a family with which the Crosniers had been formerly at variance, the persuasions of Max, and the prudent deportment of Madame Jacques, prevailed in inducing the old people to admit the newly-married couple as inmates under their roof. One of the chambers of the second floor was assigned to their use, leaving the other still sacred to the goods and chattels left behind by Maxime on embarking for his voyage. The *ivoirier* repaired every morning to his workshop, slipping home for meals and an occasional chat with his demure bride; and the old people not only reconciled themselves to the addition to their household, but were cheered by the constant spectacle of happiness and affection.

"Thou hast done thyself an ill turn, lad, by introducing to thy father's hearthside two that are little inclined to advance thy interests in life," cried Bouzard to his nephew, when Max went to take leave of his friends previous to sailing. "A word in thine ear, Max, my boy. Thou wilt repent having given thy shoes to wear in thine absence to that bone-clipping brother of thine."

"Jacques hath as good a right as I to abide under my father's roof," replied Maxime; "nay, *more*—since *he* hath a wife to maintain, while I (thank God) have at present no mistress save fine weather."

"Thou wilt have a master soon, if I have any skill to read the compass," cried Bouzard. "Jacques is a smooth-spoken chap, able to palaver the eyes out of a man's head; as thou wouldst have known long ago to thy cost, but for the favour thou seemst to have brought with thee into the world thou wert born to. But smooth as he is, Max, he

hath taken to himself a mate with fifty-fold his own cunning and make-believe. If Madame Jacques don't get the length of my sister's foot before the year's out, my name is not Jean Bouzard! Mark, I beseech thee, Max, how artfully this woman hath already rigged herself from top to toe after the strictest fashion of a Poltais, instead of the gay fly-caps and body-gear she wore as a maiden; and not a work from her lips *now*, forsooth, that a soul t'other side the harbour is likely to understand! 'Tis not natural, Max, in a Dieppoise to whistle her words Pollet fashion. As our song says,—

'Moi, ze fais ma ronde
En Poltais racourchi,
Et tout au bout du compte
Ze n'ai qu'un mélan ouït!'

But I'm plaguily mistaken if Madame Jacques don't get more as her portion by pretending love for the Pollet than a stale whiting, or even her lawful half of thy father's belongings."

"I'm not apt to judge harshly those who are loved by those I love," cried Maxime. "I warrant, uncle, you'll have changed your mind about my sister-in-law by the time I'm home again!"

It was Maxime, however, who was fated to change his mind. Scarcely had the Amphitrite sailed, when Madame Jacques, who, by dint of the most artful obsequiousness, was now high in favour with the narrow-minded old Madame Crosnier, began to insinuate that it was a lucky thing for Maxime he was forced by his profession from Dieppe, as another month's sauntering among the bosquets of the Faubourg de la Barre would have placed him at the mercy of a certain Mademoiselle Louise, a coquette of indifferent reputation, the daughter of Swiss refugees, who, after a life of adventure in Paris, were fain to hide their heads and their poverty at Dieppe, probably with a view of escaping from their creditors by embarking for England.

Madame Crosnier heard and trembled! It had been for many years her favourite project to unite her darling son with the only daughter of one of her *commeres* of the Pollet, her fellow-labourer of old with the shrimping-net and the *chalut*, and now her evening companion over a cup of *cafe*

*noir*, or a glass of *anisette*. That Max should not only defeat her plan, but think of introducing into an honest family of the Pollet some tripping foreign minx covered with ribbons and furbelows, caused a flush of indignation to overspread her bronzed cheeks.

"This, then, was the reason that the blockhead could never be persuaded to spend his Sundays at home with us!" cried Madame Crosnier; "and no one to warn me of the danger that was hanging over the family! *Sapristie!* to think that I might have had a daughter-in-law pretending to sup my soup in a flounced petticoat, and, who knows—perhaps a silken bonnet cocked on the top of her empty head!"

"You would not have wished my husband to injure his brother by hinting what was going on?" inquired Madame Jacques meekly.

"I would; and even now I will have him acquaint his silly boy of a brother in the letter he has undertaken to write for us to Max in the course of the winter (for God knows Pierre Crosnier and I are better hands with the rudder and distaff than with pens and ink!) that when he comes back to Dieppe, he must make up his mind either never again to set foot in the house of this foreign hussey, or never to re-enter his father's. There's choice left him, Madame Jacques, and that's enough."

This denunciation was duly transmitted to his brother by Jacques Crosnier, who undertook at the same time to exert his influence with his parents to procure a remission of the sentence previous to Maxime's return. Yet so far was this engagement from being fulfilled, that neither the *ivoirier* nor his wife omitted a single occasion to poison the ears of the old people with rumours and anecdotes, redounding to the discredit of Ma'amselle Louise. They even eventually admitted their apprehension that—according to the common reports of the neighbourhood—Maxime was actually pledged to marry the foreigner, and had only been restrained from communicating his intentions to his family, by dread of prematurely provoking their opposition.

"He is only waiting," quoth the demure Madame Jacques, "till his ventures have prospered, ere he takes unto himself a wife of his own choosing."

"That shall be seen," cried old Pierrette, in a fury.

"Our lady be praised! children have as yet no warrant in France for rebellion against their parents!"

And having arrayed herself in her richest Sunday cap and amplest petticoat of scarlet kersey, she set off across the *pont des ecluses*, and up the *cours*, towards the Faubourg de la Barre; where, having attained the modest habitation of the widowed mother of Louise, she poured forth her denunciations,—rendered almost inarticulate by the unusual effort of transporting her sixteen stone of solidity to the sunny slopes of La Barre. Had not the old lady's eyes been somewhat dazzled by the glare, as well as her respiration impeded by the exercise, she would have noticed that the fair and humble girl, who, by her industry as sempstress, was supporting a venerable parent, was a far different being from the flaunting coquette described by her artful daughter-in-law. But after having called the saints to witness that neither she nor her husband would ever sanction the marriage contract of their son Max with any but a Poltais, Madame Crosnier rushed forth again on her way homewards, without pausing to examine the result of her invectives, or the aspect of the Dumont family.

Overpowered by so strange an inbreak, the poor girl beloved by Maxime had in fact fallen senseless to the ground. Louise was a patient, laborious, gentle creature, the very person to have conciliated the regard of his mother, had she viewed her with unprejudiced eyes.

Madame Jacques's report of the engagement of the young couple meanwhile was a true bill—having been communicated in confidence to her husband by his brother, who intended to choose an auspicious moment at some future time for breaking the matter to his parents. But now, all hope of a favourable termination to the business was at an end. The Crosniers threatened their malediction in case of Maxime's perseverance; and the elder brother, satisfied that under such circumstances the high-spirited Max would neither complete nor relinquish his engagements with Louise, flattered himself that his junior must remain a bachelor to the end of his days, and that there would be no new rival to his influence in the Pollet.

The vessel in which Maxime Crosnier had departed, was at length seen in the offing, waiting for the tide that was to

enable her to enter the harbour. According to the custom of the place, a pilot-boat instantly put off to communicate to the Dieppois captain the events that had occurred in the town during his absence, which *he* alone was privileged to announce to his crew. For while the deepest anxiety prevails on board a French homeward-bound ship among husbands waiting to know the welfare of their families, and children dreading to learn the loss of their parents, the men are summoned one by one to the cabin, and informed by their captain of the good or ill news awaiting them on landing.

As it happened, however, to be Jean Bouzard who, on the present occasion, hailed the *Amphitrite*, the captain consented to allow him the favour of a personal interview with his nephew, her second mate; and in a moment, Maxime Crosnier was in the arms of his uncle.

"All's over for thee, lad;—" cried the mariner, after having satisfied the young man of the health of his family; "that which I predicted hath come to pass. A serpent hath knotted herself round thy mother's heart; and thou must prepare to give up all intercourse with thy *bonne amie*, Louise Dumont, or re-enter thy father's house no more—*et voila!*

Maxime's heart, which was still beating with the delight of being again pressed to the bosom of his kind good uncle, sank like lead at this afflicting announcement. Further explanations did but aggravate his despair. "Thy foolish mother charged me to be the bearer of these evil tidings," said Bouzard. "Now, thou art warned of the worst. Ask me for no counsel;—for, on the soul of an honest seaman, Max, I know not how to advise thee, since I cannot guess how far thou art committed with the girl. But unless thou art minded to give her up, hazard no meeting at present with thy father and mother; for there is no saying to what extremities their vexation may urge them."

This declaration was soon painfully attested. Amid the hundreds who thronged the jetty to catch the first sight of the long absent ones, as the good ship the *Amphitrite* was towed into the harbour, no one came to welcome Maxime Crosnier. Louise and her mother were weeping silently at home. They dared not make their appearance on the quay,

lest they should seem to confront the wrath of his parents; while Madame Crosnier and her spouse were watching anxiously, yet sullenly, from their window in the Pollet, waiting the event of their negotiation with their son.

The result was, that Maxime made no attempt to re-enter his father's abode. A tear sprang into his eye as he steered past the *Belle Gabrielle* in the harbour, and inferred, from the manner in which the good old craft lay neglected, that his father had no longer heart to superintend his property. But he slept that night under the roof of his uncle Bouzard, after spending an evening of intermingled joy and affliction with his affianced wife; and having learned in detail to what excess his parents were carrying their exasperation, entreated his uncle to acquaint them on the morrow with his determination to wait the influence of time upon their prejudices, but his fixed resolve to wed with no other wife than the excellent Louise Dumont.

Madame Crosnier meanwhile, who, in spite of all, was burning with impatience to clasp her rebellious but darling son in her arms, would have been unable to persist in her obduracy, had not her insidious daughter-in-law laboured to convince her that the eyes of the Pollet were fixed upon her proceedings, expecting an example from her firmness. Madame Jacques had already succeeded in obtaining an express interdiction, on pain of paternal malediction, of all intercourse between Jacques and his brother; and now filled up every spare moment with reports of disrespectful language uttered by Maxime against his parents; and insinuations that, in the filial duty of her own little boy, the grandfather and grandmother would find consolation for the contumacy of their ungrateful son.

It is astonishing, when once a family feud is established, what pains are taken by neighbours, not otherwise ill-meaning, to widen the breach! A few of the relations of the designing Madame Jacques—a few of the disappointed rivals of Maxime—a few of those who found it convenient to court the rising sun of the *ivoirier* and his wife,—and not a few who, for want of better employment, amused themselves with stirring up the wrath of old Pierrette,—contrived so bitterly to aggravate, in the course of the next six weeks, the ill-will of the parties, that Maxime, who had determined,

previous to his return, to spend the winter at home, in order, if his parents' consent could be obtained, to solemnize his marriage with a wife whom the success of his ventures already afforded him the means of maintaining, now acceded to the proposals of the owner of the *Amphitrite*, and accepted the command of one of the fine vessels which were about to sail for the codfishery on the coast of Newfoundland.

It was noticed that, on the week preceding the sailing of the little fleet, Maxime, as well as Madame Dumont and her daughter, were missing four days from Dieppe. Some said they were gone to Rouen on an excursion of pleasure; some said to Havre; and one or two, recollecting that Louise and her mother were of Swiss origin, whispered that perhaps Maxime Crosnier had suffered himself to be converted to the Reform church; and that the young people were gone to get furtively married according to the rites of the Lutheran church, of which, in many cities of Normandy, there exists congregations.

It was fortunate for Maxime that he was already out of port before this rumor reached the ears of his parents or even of his uncle Bouzard, who was a bigoted and superstitious Papist. But before Madame Jacques found occasion to repeat the tale, Maxime was gone, and the Dumonts gone also. The mother and daughter having sold off their scanty furniture, had retired to the village of Arques, probably to be beyond the reach of the animosity of the Crosnier family, and to subsist upon the funds left with them by Maxime.

It is not to be supposed that Jacques Crosnier (though his jealousy of his brother was stimulated a thousand fold by the unconcealed misery of his parents at losing sight of their favorite son) could consent without scruple to all the malpractices of his wife. It was only by pleading hypocritically the cause of the two infants of whom she was now the mother, and representing that, should Maxime once reobtain a footing in his father's house, he would inevitably retaliate upon *them* and procure their expulsion,—that Madame Jacques obtained his co-operation. They had gone too far to recede; and he silenced his conscience by reminding himself that all stratagems were lawful to secure his brother's salvation, by preventing his marriage with a

Protestant. Still, when at the close of the five months, which usually formed the limit of the absence of the Newfoundland fleet, Bouzard took his station every morning, glass in hand, upon the jetty, and announced that the *Terre-Neuviers* were not yet in sight, the heart of the elder brother began to wax heavy.

Six months passed away—the seventh was advancing—and still no tidings. On the Exchange of Dieppe not a broker could be found to listen to the proposals of the owners. Bouzard was to be seen from sunrise to nightfall, watching upon the *falaise ;* and old Crosnier and his wife spent their lives on their knees at the foot of the Calvary erected on the jetty. Already they had vowed an offering of a full-rigged frigate in ivory to the shrine of Notre Dame des Greves in the event of Maxime's return ; and would have rushed to clasp the truant in their arms, even had he presented himself holding the hand of a Protestant wife. But it was fated that Maxime should come no more. In the eighth month, a letter from Prince Edward's Island apprized the associated owners of the Newfoundland fleet, that, having been dispersed by a frightful storm, four of the vessels had reassembled in the most distressed condition, and with great difficulty made for the nearest port to refit ; the *Pearl*, the fifth vessel, having foundered at sea. Of the *Pearl*, the fated fifth, had Maxime Crosnier the command !—The vessel had been seen for the last time at nightfall, on the 30th of December, battling with the rising tempest, and Maxime was then on the deck, encouraging the men, and exerting unexampled energies in working his dismasted ship. On the arrival of the *Terre-Neuviers* in the harbor, amid the acclamations of multitudes who had dreaded never to behold their entrance into the port of Dieppe, it was a sad thing to see the widows and orphans of those who were lost in the *Pearl* crowding to interrogate their surviving comrades, and obtaining from *all* the same answer, that the poor *Pearl* could not have lived half an hour in such a sea as that of the 30th of December, after she was last seen by her convoy.

No one however, appeared to make further inquiries after Max. Old Crosnier was on his death-bed, and his family in anxious attendance upon his last moments ; and it was noticed that though the tidings of the loss of his son had

broken the heart of the old man, yet so obstinately did he cling to the hope of Maxime's survival, to reappear at some future moment, that no persuasions of the notary employed by the *ivoirier* and his wife could induce him to frame his last will and testament, otherwise than by bequeathing his whole property to his wife for her lifetime, with a request that she would divide it by will between his representatives. It was conjectured by the disappointed Jacques that his uncle Bouzard had some share in suggesting this absurd disposition; and vexation was gnawing at his heart when, with outward signs of grief, he followed his father to the grave, and remembered that, for her life, his mother must retain her authority.

Nevertheless, so thoroughly was Madame Crosnier's spirit broken by the loss of her husband and son, that it was easy for the *ivoirier's* wife to obtain sole ascendancy in the house in the Pollet. Half the old woman's time was spent in that long-closed chamber of the second floor, which still contained a few personal tokens of her beloved Max—foreign shells and feathers, and Indian implements and toys, which the poor old mariner had chosen to have laid upon his death-bed, that he might stretch his wasted hand over something that had once belonged to his boy. Amid these treasures, and opposite to a rough canoe of birch-bark, the handiwork of the shipwrecked man, would the venerable Pierrette sit for hours, wandering back into the past, reviling her own hardness of heart towards her Maxime, and grieving that not one of the tame-hearted, cunning children of her son Jacques should, in the slightest degree, recall to mind the brave, rebellious, curly-headed varlet who, twenty years before, used to tag after her along the shore of the Pollet, watching for the return of the *Belle Gabrielle*. The *Belle Gabrielle* was sold to a stranger; and the little curly-headed lad a senseless corse beneath the howling waves of the Atlantic! No wonder that the afflicted mother should weep and bemoan herself. No wonder that Madame Jacques impatient of her continued control in the house, should reproach her with indifference towards her more deserving and still surviving son.

Weary of these constantly recurring remonstrances, and anxious to conceal her tears, Madame Crosnier was apt

to wander out from the Pollet on summer evenings; sometimes along the cliffs, as if she still expected that a future fleet of *Terre-Neuviers* might include the long-lost *Pearl*, but oftener, along the green valley of the Scie and the Saane. On one occasion, about four years after the loss of her husband, the poor old soul, no longer comely, no longer oppressed with *embonpoint*, was taking her sad and solitary way through the silence of a dreary September evening up the ascent leading to the cemetery of the Pollet, without noticing that, before her on the road, toiled a poor woman heavily charged with one of the wicker hods of the country, who now and then turned round to look after a little fellow as raggedly accoutred as herself. At length, a few paces in advance of Madame Crosnier, she paused to call the boy, who was seeking berries in the hedge; and the name by which she addressed her child went straight to the heart of the sorrowing mother.—*It was Max!*—

"How art thou called, little one?" inquired Madame Crosnier, taking the hand of the boy, when, tardily obeying the call, he at length followed his mother, who was proceeding at some distance along the road.

"My name is Maxime Crosnier—but I am only called Max. Now let me go for I am tired and hungry; and mother has promised that if I step out, perhaps she will give me a bit of bread for supper."

"And where is thy mother?"—persisted the agitated Pierrette.

"She is yonder there, at the top of the hill."

"Thou hast a father, perhaps?"—persisted the old lady, in a faltering voice.

"Yes."

"And where is thy father?"

"Far away, under the sea. My poor father was lost by shipwreck; and granny is dead, and though mother works very, *very* hard, it is not always we can get food."

Madame Crosnier sat down on the bank by the way-side, without relinquishing the hand of the child, who stood wondering by her side.

"What was thy grandmother's name?"—she continued, in a scarcely audible whisper, dreading that the reply might crush the delightful hopes already dawning in her heart;

and when poor little Max breathed in her ear the name of "Dumont," the sobs with which she threw her arms around him, and then, placing him at arm's length, considered and reconsidered his handsome, intelligent little face, so terrified the boy, that he soon mingled his tears with those of his unknown relative. "Thou art *his*—thou art *mine*—thou shalt *remain* with me!" cried the poor old soul,—who, at the moment, felt as if one restored from the dead were folded in her arms; and while the boy struggled to extricate himself from her embraces, his mother, having returned along the road to seek her lost treasure, stood beside them in utter amazement. The explanation that ensued was heart-rending. The wasted cheek and callous hands of poor Louise attested the tale of her sufferings, her wants, her labors, for the sake of Maxime's son. After the death of her mother, she had made known to Jacques Crosnier her situation, and the lawfulness of her wedlock with his brother; yet, at the instigation of his partner, the churl had not only refused her relief, but prevented her tale from reaching the ear of his mother. The widow of Max had been led to believe that, if she presented herself before the family of Maxime, both she and her idolized boy would be exposed to injury and insult. Sheltering herself, in the obscure village where her mother had breathed her last, she devoted herself submissively to the severest daily labor. Her comfort was in her child. It was sufficient for her consolation to breathe the name of "Max," and to find it answered by the sweet voice and fair looks of one who had the living portrait of the lover of her youth.

In the dusk of that eventful evening, the two sorrowing women returned together to the Pollet; and from that night scarcely lived one hour apart, till the sister of Bouzard was laid in the grave. Together they wept over him they had lost—together related to the young child the prowess and feats of his father. Old Pierrette felt that she could not lavish sufficient love and affection upon this recovered treasure,—this morsel of his favorite son,—this image of her darling Max; and old Bouzard was scarcely less delighted to perceive that the boy was likely to become a worthy representative of his favorite nephew. From the startling moment of Madame Max's appearance in the Pollet, under the

protection of her mother-in-law, Jacques and his wife, as if hoping by submission to disarm inquiry and silence invective, gradually withdrew from the place, and established a household of their own; more especially on perceiving that Madame Crosnier, instead of shuddering at the heresies of her daughter-in-law, exerted herself with success to establish the legality of Louise's marriage, in order to bestow upon her grandson his lawful share of the property of his forefathers.

The two oaken presses of the mansion of the Pollet are accordingly now disunited, and the twelve silver *couverts* have diminished to six; for Pierrette, great as was to the last her adoration of the Max of her own Max, was strictly just in her division of her belongings between her two grandsons. According to the desire of the widow Jacques, her eldest son received in money, from his grandmother, an equivalent for the family dwelling, and is now a flourishing tailor in the town of Dieppe. But the jolly mariner, who may be seen to this very hour upon the quays, in affectionate discourse with his cousin, the Bouzard of the present day, and who inhabits, with a pretty, merry, little wife, and a grave but happy old mother, a house in the Grande Rue of the Pollet (the windows of which are bright with geraniums, and seem to be alive with linnets and canaries,) is no other than Maxime Crosnier!

His children still delight in showing to strangers the shells and curiosities gathered in foreign parts by their shipwrecked grandfather; and the family may be visited and regarded by travellers as and advantageous specimen of the Mariners of the Pollet.

# THE WIFE OF AN ARISTOCRAT.

The Chateau d'Armentieres is one of the few country houses in France which can pretend to rivalship with the rural residences of Great Britain. The finest of our English parks is but a favored "bit" of nature; an enwalled or enfenced portion of landscape, trained by the hand of art to resemble the more picturesque districts of the island. In France, on the contrary, the pleasure grounds of a country seat are not only artifical, but aim at distinguishing themselves from the common-place of nature.—The lily must be painted—the violet perfumed. Plants are marshalled as in the ranks of a regiment;—forest trees trimmed and trained as for the bandbox of an artificial florist. The garden contains as much marble or granite, as shrubs or soil. Ballustrades of stone replace the fragrant fence of sweetbriar; and the stately vase, upon its pedestal, usurps in the shrubbery the place of the gum-cistus or rhododendron. The French, regarding this ornate artificiality as an evidence of cost and care, will not believe that English people allow the lime-trees on their lawns to extend untrimmed their luxuriant branches, from any other motive than an economy of labor.

At Armentieres things are no better ordered than elsewhere.—The mansion is surrounded by the usual intersections of rectangular sanded walks, and box-edged parterres; a terrace overlooking a muddy canal; a few stone basins

full of grass-green Tritons and Nereids, each capable of throwing up a fountain, were the leaden pipes less full of chinks, or the stagnant water in which they are dabbling less full of tadpoles; a grove of chesnut trees, whose tall, straight stems stand formally arranged, like the pipes of an organ; and a wilderness of weeds and cinque-foil beyond, which passes under the honorary denomination of park. Such are the features of Armentieres. Yet, on the whole, it is a beautiful residence; for the pleasure grounds are fortunately small, and nature has done wonders for the environs of a place where art exhibits only those fantastic tricks which, instead of playing before high Heaven, she would do well to restrict to the decoration of an opera house. Below the limits of the hard, stiff gardens, lies a deep and richly wooded ravine, with a brook leaping along the bottom; and beyond the opposite bank extends a healthy forest, intersected with hoary masses of rock;—one portion thickly grown with the noblest timber, another partially cleared, and rendered picturesque by its patches of silver birch trees. Spanish chesnuts, and straggling juniper. Situated on the confines of the estates of the house of Bourbon-Conde, you may ride ten miles from Armentieres to the Palace of Chantilly, through a succession of forest scenery worthy some Tuscan romance, or the pages of Hobbima.

Leon d'Armentieres, who, at the epoch of the restoration of the Bourbons to the throne of France, occupied the Chateau and its dependencies, was a fine, open-spirited young man of four-and-twenty, born amid the terrors of the revolution, and apparently foredoomed to suffer the penalty of noble birth by a life of penury and privation. But on the accession of Napoleon, a grateful recollection on the part of the new Emperor of some trifling service rendered him in his earlier days by the Baron d'Armentieres, produced an unexpected change in the fortunes of the family. They were sought out in their obscure retreat, and loaded with the favors of government. The Baron soon obtained means of redeeming his confiscated estates, and nothing but his untimely death on the field of Austerlitz, prevented him from rising to the highest honors of the state. Within a few months of the fatal event the Baroness fell a victim to affliction, bequeathing their only son to the guardianship of

the Emperor. Leon d'Armentieres—enrolled among the pages of the Imperial household, mechanically adopted the views, sentiments, and principles, with which gratitude had inspired his parents. Many of the most illustrious houses in France—Montesquieus Narbonnes, Breteuils were already, indeed, in service at the Tuileries; and, but that Leon had flattered himself that he should be honored, on attaining the fitting age, with a military appointment, he might have congratulated himself on his good fortune, when, on entering his eighteenth year, the Emperor selected him as equerry to the newly-born King of Rome.

It was rumoured in the Imperial circle, that the Baroness d'Armentieres, whose early death was produced by the loss of her husband on the field of battle, had personally implored the Emperor to spare her only son from the fatal ranks of his army. But Leon himself cherished an embittering suspicion that the great soldier did not judge him worthy to serve under his banners; and a disgust against the splendid servitude in which he was enlisted, took possession of his bosom.

For some years past, indeed, the chief pleasure of Leon's life had consisted in such visits to the Chateau d'Armentieres as his duties at the Tuileries would permit,—the Chateau where he was born, and which he had inhabited for several years of his existence. To *him* every tree of the domain was familiar, every hill a friendly object. The verdure of Fontainebleau or Compiegne never appeared, in *his* eyes, to rival that of his own fine woods. Nowhere was the climate so wholesome—nowhere the field sports so exhilarating. *There* he was an object of universal interest; the very woodcutters could date the day and the hour of his birth!—nay! the blind beggar, stationed by the villagers to warm himself in the sunshine safe within the gates of the avenue, appeared to have an instinctive knowledge that his approaching footstep was that of the young Baron d'Armentieres.

The place had been but roughly kept up during Leon's minority. The shutters of the grand suite of apartments remained closed, except when, once a year or so, it became necessary to remove the mildew from the pictures and tapestry, and ascertain how far moth and rust had corrupted

during the preceeding twelvemonth. The avenue and court of honor were obstructed by trunks of trees lying seasoning in the sun, preparatory to being chopped up for firewood; and, as to the gardens, they were almost as luxuriant and beautiful as if there existed neither a gardener nor a pruning-hook in France. But all this disorder afforded an agreeable change to Leon after the precise precincts of the court; and he loved the very weeds of the flower-borders, because they seemed to flourish of their own accord.

"Were I my own master," cried Leon, every time he passed the gate of the Chateau on his way back to his official duties, "I would never quit Armentieres."

"You fancy so, because 'tis almost the only thing you are not at liberty to do," observed his bosom friend, Count Phillip de Breteuil, one day, when on his return from a sporting September week of holidays, Leon indulged in his usual declaration.

"Partiality to one's birth-place, methinks, is no very uncommon failing," said he, moderating his indignation, as he leaned back in the embrasure of a window in an ante-chamber of the palace at St. Cloud, where Breteuil and himself were officiating in the duties of their appointments.

"Granted! for what is it but one of the thousand-and-one modifications of human self-sufficiency?"

"Well, then—egotism apart—surely there is nothing objectionable in preferring, for my residence, one of the most beautiful spots in the kingdom?"

"Fontainebleau is one of the most beautiful spots in the kingdom," replied Breteuil, with provoking calmness; "yet you were as much bored there last week, as if you had been camping with some roving tribe in Stony Arabia."

"With or *without* a sufficient reason, then, give me leave to assert that I love the home of my fathers beyond all other places under the canopy of Heaven."

"You love the home of your father's son, I fancy," replied Breteuil, playing with his sword knot. "You find yourself a little king in your little chateau. We all like to sovereignize when and where we are able."

"To prove how completely you mistake my motives, know that my present partiality for Armentieres is trifling, compared with the love I bore the place on quitting it, at

ten years old; when I and Margaret used to wander through the woods in springtime, making garlands of wild anemones and lilies of the valley."

"And who is Margaret?—Your sister?"

"I am an only child. Margaret was a little girl nursed and reared by the porter's wife."

"A pretty playmate, truly, for the young Chatlain! What might be her name?"

"The young Chatelain never inquired. She was always 'Margaret to *me*, unless, indeed, when I called her my little wife."

"And what do you call her *now*?"

"I have heard nothing of her these ten years past. Margaret was taken home from her foster-mother about the period I entered the Tuileries; and, by this, she is probably the portly wife of some grocer of the Rue St. Denis."

"I wonder you never sought her out, that for once, you might insure becoming sympathy in your passion for the old oak trees of Armentieres!" said Breteuil, with a sneer. "But *apropos* to love and matrimony, I have news for you! Whom, think you, is going to be noosed in the silken chain?"

"If I am to guess the least likely man in Paris, allow me to name yourself!"

"Right!—for once you have hit the mark."

"How!" cried Leon, who had intended a mere pleasantry; "*you*, my dear Count, are *really* going to be married?"

"So the Emperor informs me, and he is apt to be correct on such points."

"And to whom?"

"To a Mademoiselle Gallien, or Galiand, or some such person."

"The proposition, then, did not spring from yourself—the lady is not of your own selection?"

"No!—I asked the Emperor for the means of paying my debts; and he was not only so liberal as to afford them, but to throw me a wife into the bargain. He bestows upon me the only child of a *receveur-general*, and aid-de-campship. The marriage contract is to be signed to-night; to-morrow

the marriage will be solemnized at St. Roch; and, if the Emperor deigns to listen to my next request as graciously as to the last, I shall set off on the following day, to accompany him to Russia."

"Mademoiselle *Gallien or Galiand* is much indebted to your gallantry," said Leon. "But don't you invite me to your wedding?"

"The Emperor further informs me you are to be my bridesman. So be ready to accompany me, at seven this evening, to the Rue de Grenelle, when I am to be presented to my bride; in order to present her with a few thousand livres' worth of diamonds, as marriage gifts, at the expense of their Imperial Majesties."

Even trained as Leon had been in the heartlessness of a court, there was something in the cool insensibility of Breteuil that excited his disgust. He attired himself for the ceremonial of the evening with an involuntary feeling of compassion towards the unfortunate girl about to be sacrificed in order to repair the disorders of a libertine; and turned a deaf ear to the piquant sallies of the bridegroom, as they ascended the grand staircase of a fine hotel in the Faubourg St. Germain. The names of "Messieurs the Count Philippe de Breteuil and the Baron Leon d'Armentieres," were loudly announced by a succession of domestics; and Monsieur "Gallien or Galiand," with whom Breteuil had already had repeated interviews at the house of his man of business, advanced to the very door of the ante-chamber to welcome his noble son-in-law. Leon cast a mistrustful glance upon the countenance of the old financier, who, it was clear had made a mere bargain of his daughter; for Galiand was to become Monsieur le Baron when his child became Madame la Comtesse. The rich upstart was to be ennobled—the impoverished peer enriched; all which formed part of Napoleon's favourite system of "fusion."

"It is to be hoped, for Breteuil's sake, that the young lady may possess a more prepossessing face than her father," thought Leon, as they followed the pompous guidance of his host through a suite of sumptuous chambers; in the furthest of which, stood a writing table surrounded by lawyers, and a lovely young woman, attired in bridal white, surrounded by a posse of female relatives. Nothing more

noble or more graceful than the air with which she returned the salutations, and accepted the bouquet almost contemptuously offered to her by Breteuil; and even the latter was struck by the beauty of her person, and quiet dignity of her demeanour. At her father's suggestion, the contents of the marriage articles were now hastily run over by the notary; and, with the exception of a start from Leon on hearing the name of the bride recited as "Marie Marguerite Galiand," no one gave evidence of having listened to a syllable. The ladies present were occupied in admiring the rich lace of which Mary Margaret's dress was composed; and the men, the dauntless audacity with which the aristocratic bridegroom supported the ignominious publicity of his pauperism.

The notary bowed his head at the conclusion of the last page, in token that his task was over; on which the Count offered his hand to the lady (through whom he found himself endowed with half a million lawful monies of the realm,) to lead her to the table whereon the parchments were extended. The pen was placed in her hand; and while, below the hurried signature it served to trace, all the illustrious personages present were inscribing their names as witnesses of the covenant, Breteuil took the opportunity to present, to the notice of Mademoiselle, his friend and bridesman, the Baron Leon d'Armentieres. The young Baron advanced, at the summons of Breteuil, to offer the customary compliments. But, as their eyes met, the ejaculation of "Margaret" on one side, and "Leon" on the other, cut short all form of speech; and it was with some difficulty that the Count gleaned, from their hurried explanations, that he was about to lead to the altar the little wife of his young friend. Yes! the future Madame la Comtesse Philippe de Breteuil had actually been ushered into life as the nursling of the Porter's wife of the Chateau d'Armentieres!

Old Galiand was, in fact, one of those mysterious nobodies whose fortune became magnified with such incredible rapidity in the commissariat department of the army in Spain. His means had been as humble as his origin, even so lately as the period when the death of his young wife, in childbed, left a motherless girl upon his hands. Yet scarcely had Margaret attained her tenth year, when his enormous

wealth made it incumbent on him to remove his future heiress from her obscure retreat, to be trained into finished courtliness by the experienced hands of Madame Campan. The rumour of her prospects and merits now reached the ear of the Emperor; and determined him to render her hand a prize for one of his indigent adherents. That the delicacy of Mademoiselle Galiand could be wounded by this summary mode of disposing of her destinies, never entered into his high and mighty calculations!—

"And thus, my dear Leon, the fates have been playing at cross-purposes with our fortunes," observed Breteuil to his young friend, as they retired together, at an early hour that night, in order to be in readiness for the solemnity of the morrow. "'Tis a pity but I had earlier discovered your pre-engagement with my betrothed; for it is probable that the Emperor might have patched up *your* affairs with her dowry as readily as mine; while, to *myself*, it would of course have been a matter of indifference to be indebted for the indemnization of my creditors to some other grocer's daughter or chandler's widow."

"Margaret is neither the daughter of a grocer nor the widow of a chandler, that I am aware of," replied Leon, in a tone at least as bitter as the irony of his companion; "and *my* affairs, thank Heaven, stand in no need of patching. The Chateau d'Armentieres——"

"The Chateau d'Armentieres! Still and always the Chateau d'Armentieres!" sneered Breteuil, who had been irritated not a little by discovering, in the course of the evening, that Mademoiselle Galiand, so far from being touched by his lofty homage, was wholly engrossed by the renewal of her acquaintance with his young bridesman. "Surely we have heard enough of the Chateau d'Armentieres to-night, to last us for some time to come. Margaret and yourself seem to yearn grievously after the porter's lodge, in which she received her education!—

'A tous les cœurs bien nes, que la patrie est chere.'"

Leon forbore to reply. He was ruminating whether it might not still be possible to rescue his dear little Margaret from the arms of the callous libertine by whom she was

predestined to contempt and neglect. But his cogitations proved infructuous. On the following morning, the Archbishop of Paris united the unloving couple. On the following night, the Count and Countess de Breteuil took possession of the apartments allotted them in the Palace of the Tuileries. And, on the following month, the bride became once more the inmate of her father's beautiful villa in the valley of Montmorency;—Count Philippe de Breteuil, aide-de-camp to his Imperial Majesty, having taken his departure for the grand army.

During the intervening period, d'Armentieres had found no occasion for the renewal of his intimacy with Madame de Breteuil. The whole court rang with praises of her beauty, and admiration of the dignity of her demeanour; yet the Count omitted no opportunity of observing to Leon, whenever chance threw them into a *tete-a-tete*—"I cannot forgive you, my dear Baron, for having neglected to inspire poor Margaret with some insight into men and things, as they exist in the every-day world, instead of losing your time pulling posies in the woods of Armentieres. It is *your* fault, rather than mine, that my wife makes her first appearance at court with the air and manners of a kitchen-maid. Thank heaven, she has consented to pass the time of my absence in retirement with her father and his low associates. To *me*, it would be worse than death from the lance of a Don Cossack, to know that the creature was disgracing me by exposing her *gaucheries* to all the *parvenue* Duchesses of Bonaparte's mushroom circle!"—

Leon was not sufficiently a man of the world to reply, as Breteuil had expected, to this attack upon his wife; and when the Emperor and his suite quitted Paris, the young man judged it better to dismiss from his mind the unsatisfactory renewal of his acquaintance with the "Margaret" of his early years.

There was one spot, however, in which Margaret was not to be forgotten. The first visit paid by the Baron to the home of his infancy insensibly reconjured before him the image of his little playfellow, contrasted with that of the beautiful woman, radiant with jewels and brocade, whom he had seen presented at court as the Countess de Breteuil. "I loved her best in her little stuff frock and cotton apron,"

thought he, many months after her marriage, as he pursued his way along the ravine by the side of the brook where they had been accustomed to gather and crown each other with water-flowers and rushes. "But no one can dispute the loveliness of Madame de Breteuil."

It did not surprise him to learn from Guillot, the porter, that, in the course of the summer, a beautiful lady, from the valley of Montmorency, had visited Armentieres; passing the day in wandering through the environs, and conferring happiness on the inhabitants of the whole district, by the extent of her benefactions.

"You should have seen her sitting with my old woman up at the lodge, Monsieur le Baron!" said old Guillot—"arranging in our press the stock of linen with which she came provided; and looking over our stock of furniture to discover of what we stood in need; and sure enough, a few days afterwards, Pierre the waggoner left at our door, for our use, a bed and buffet, such as would do honour to any room in the Chateau d'Armentieres!"

"And did you not manage to learn the name of your strange benefactress?" inquired Leon.

"The *title*—not the name," answered Guillot. "I found out that the beautiful lady was a countess, whose husband is absent with the army; which is no doubt the cause of her unhappiness, poor young creature! For the tears stood in her eyes all the time she sat talking to my old woman; and more than once, they rolled down her cheeks, and I thought she was going to speak freely, and give loose to her feelings. But the old gentleman who accompanied her (her father, I believe—in spite of his age and infirmities, so cold, and so stiff, and so proud of the ribbon at his button-hole!) bad her recollect herself, or recollect her promise, or something of the sort. And then she dried up her tears, and began to talk of *you*, sir; *not* as most visitors here talk of you—to inquire how many horses you have in your stable, or how many wild boars you sent home last hunting season; but whether you were a kind master to your people, and a good landlord to the poor."

"You gave me a tolerable character, I trust, to so pretty a lady?" inquired Leon, trying to smile.

"I rather think not, sir. The moment your name was

mentioned, my old woman, as usual, began to sob and whimper; and to talk over the days when you lived at the Chateau with your tutor, and little Margaret was at nurse with us, and you used to play together. And when my old woman gets upon the chapter of Margaret, as your Excellency is well aware, she never knows where to stop; and up came all the old tales, story by story, of how you were lost together in——"

"And what said the Countess?" demanded Leon, to spare himself the well-known tale.

"Oh! the Countess had nothing better to do than to sit and cry for company. She even took the poor withered hand of my old dame between her two fair hands, and carried it to her heart and her lips, as if to comfort her. And, seeing that, sir, the old Baron bad her not make a fool of herself; and went and ordered round the carriage to the gate, and got her off and away."

"And pray, my good Guillot, what became of that said little Margaret, the nurse-child, whom you and your wife remember with so much affection?"—inquired d'Armentieres.

"She died young, sir. When we sent to ask news of the girl of her aunt (the rich mercer's wife who placed her here,) soon after she was removed from our care, we were informed that it was all over with poor Margaret. I should not wonder but her death was caused, poor child, by fretting after us and you, Monsieur le Baron. For Margaret loved you dearly, sir. Margaret would start up from her play, if she caught a glimpse of you at half a leagues distance, yonder across the brook, and off, like a fawn, to try to catch you. Oftentimes she has gone without her dinner, watching for you down by the river side, when she expected you home from fishing. Yes, Monsieur Leon, Margaret loved you very, *very* dearly."

"And did this beautiful lady from Montmorency make no promise of returning?" inquired the Baron, unwilling that Guillot should perceive how much he was affected by these assurances.

"No, sir,—no *promise*. She inquired, indeed, when you were likely to visit the Chateau, and I told her not till September. For we did not expect you, sir, before the crops

were down, and the harvest fairly over. And she said in *that* case, perhaps she might come again. 'Twas in vain my old woman and I assured her that, any way, she might come, and take her walk in the gardens, all as one as if you were away; that, by being careful to keep out of your way, she need be nowise a hindrance to you, nor *you* to *her*. She answered something about intrusion; and, as September is near at hand without sign or token of her return, I fear she will come no more."

She came, however, ere Leon had been many days established at the Chateau. He had the happiness, as he sat meditating in one of the shady avenues of the gardens, to discern, at a distance, between the decrepit figures of Guillot and his wife, the graceful person of the Countess de Breteuil. For a moment, he was uncertain whether to advance and address her, or leave her in ignorance of his presence at the Chateau. He was convinced that Margaret would not have been there, had she known of his arrival at Armentieres. But to *feel* her presence—*there*, in his favourite spot—*there*, in the beautiful haunt of his early years—yet make no sign, was impossible. Careful only to avoid compromising the mystery which Margaret seemed forced by her father to maintain towards her foster-parents, he hastened to welcome the gentle stranger within his gates, with all the honors of deferential hospitality.

Madame de Breteuil was startled and apparently vexed by the predicament in which she had placed herself. But Baron Galiand, to whom Leon was already known as the friend of his son-in-law, willingly accepted the courtesies of so distinguished a member of the Imperial household. Pleading the privilege of his age, he even begged to be left to his siesta, after the excellent collation and choice Bourdeaux set before him; and then it was that Leon and Margaret, sauntering out once more into the sunny gardens, sat down together, as of old, in a shady nook, and poured their hearts to each other in talking of the past, and concealed them altogether as studiously while talking of the present or surmising of the future!

Yet Leon fancied he could discern, from the scornful smile that involuntarily curved the beautiful lip of Margaret when she alluded to herself, she had discovered the false-

ness of her position, and the hollowness of her new dignities; that she felt her beauty, her youth, her talents, her high-mindedness, to be thrown away on one who affected to support their union, as a penance for his former prodigality.

She spoke of the court as a place she had visited in bitterness and loathing, and would willingly renounce; and, though she carefully abstained from breathing the name of Philippe de Breteuil, her whole deportment testified to the sensitive Leon that she appreciated the worldling as he deserved.

"This is the happiest morning I have spent for years!" cried D'Armentieres, reluctantly withdrawing his eyes from her animated face, when, at length, she pointed out to him that the golden light of evening was brightening around them, and that the even song of the thrush gave the signal for her departure. "Surely you will come again—or have I your permission to offer you my homage at Montmorency?" said he.

"My father will probably invite you to visit us," she replied; "but let me forestall the request by reminding you that my position is a peculiar one; and assuring you that you will confer a favor on me by declining the proposal."

Leon did not remonstrate. The serene composure of Margaret's manner convinced him she was in earnest.

Leon d'Armentieres was soon at his post again, involved anew in the vortex of the court. But how much wider a portion did the Chateau now claim in his thoughts, connected as it was with the fairest form on which he had ever looked—with the sweetest image that had ever haunted his fancy! He thought only of "Margaret." Of the Countess Philippe de Breteuil, whose beauty was a proverbial word at court, he strove to banish the idea. He wished to disencumber the recollection of "Margaret" of that which rendered it painful or pernicious. Something in her dignity of manner and sentiment, overawed every libertine project.

How manifest was her superiority to all around her! Her vain ambitious father, hungering after ribbons and titles;—her heartless, interested husband, ready to sell his hand and name for thirty pieces of silver;—the courtly minions, her new associates—all, all, were infinitely beneath

her standard of excellence; nor dared he presume to bring his own merits into comparison with hers.—He felt that he must rest satisfied with the place in her affections secured by early associations.—A fatal abyss was interposed between them.

Ere the close of the year, however, and while the vivid impressions made upon his mind at his last visit to Armentieres retained their fullest force, rumours which grievously concerned the peace of Madame de Breteuil reached the ear of Armentieres. Old Galiand, still connected with the house of business through whose prosperity he had risen to distinction, became involved in a bankruptcy created by the already failing fortunes of Napoleon. Reduced to penury, his daughter's fortune dissipated to fulfil the engagements of her husband, the old man was driven to the necessity of relinquishing the society of the child for whom he was no longer able to secure a home; and it was supposed at the Tuileries that Madame de Breteuil would derive her future subsistence from some trifling appointment in the household of Maria Louisa.

"Poor Margaret!"—was Leon's involuntary ejaculation, as he recalled to mind her expressions of disgust at even the remote prospects of such a destiny. "Margaret a prisoner at the Tuileries—Margaret obliged to submit to the hollow formalities of this heartless place—Margaret compelled to be grateful for the bitter bread of servitude!"

He did not even pause to remember that *now* he should daily behold her—that now he should enjoy unintermitting intercourse with his friend. He recollected only that Margaret would be humiliated—that Margaret would be unhappy; and hastily sat down to make an offer to old Galiand of the Chateau d'Armentieres as an asylum for himself and his daughter, at least till the return of the Count de Breteuil should provide them with a more appropriate residence. "You will do me a favor," he wrote, "by accepting the use and control of my establishment; for, having made up my mind to absent myself from the Chateau for a year to come, and unwilling to dismiss domestics who have been faithful to me and mine, I shall be puzzled how to dispose of them, unless you kindly consent to exercise my authority over my household"

Leon was careful to address his proposals to the old Baron rather than to Madame de Breteuil; and his expectations that Galiand would be less surprised than flattered by his kindness, were strictly fulfilled. And thus, sorely against her will, Madame de Breteuil found herself compelled to become the inmate of the Chateau d'Armentieres, or relinquish the society of her father; for she perhaps had less confidence than the doting Baron, in Leon's professions of a determination to avoid the place. Those professions, nevertheless, were fulfilled to the letter. The young man felt pledged by a solemn promise to Margaret—to Margaret, poor and unprotected—almost as poor, almost as unprotected, as when first he clasped her hands in his, and saluted her by the name of his little wife! Such an engagement was not to be lightly regarded by a man of honor.

At length, letters arrived from the army—that army which, for the first time, was experiencing reverses of fortune; —proving that the Count was at once apprized of the ruin of his father-in-law, and of the generous succour afforded him by Leon d'Armentieres. "I find," wrote the noble aide-de-camp, "that inveterate old fool Galiand has pulled the Devil by the tail to some purpose, and gone to the dogs, from whom, I fancy, he originally proceeded. You are vastly obliging, my dear Leon, to have afforded him a kennel. My wife seems to possess the instinct of certain animals, who, when pressed by the hunters, return to die at the place from whence they started. But why do I say *die*, since, from all accounts, Madame de Breteuil is only too likely to survive and enjoy the jointure with which my folly or my necessities compelled me to endow her? Meanwhile, flourish the Chateau d'Armentieres! which needed only to become an almshouse for my poor relations, to acquire all that it wanted of merit in my eyes."

"And he dares to speak of her thus!" exclaimed Leon; "yet I must not offer her my devoted attachment as a compensation for his insolence! I must not even present myself before her, to soften the harsh expressions Breteuil has dared to use in speaking of her father!"

Short leisure, however, was afforded to the Baron for pondering over the misfortunes of Margaret. Those of France and the Emperor forced themselves with imperative

interest upon his attention. The deceptive nature of the bulletins dispatched from the army of the north was at length recognised in Paris; and, ere the credulous people could recover the first shock of their consternation, Napoleon himself arrived suddenly at the Tuileries—defeated—a fugitive; and it was clear, even to the most partial, that Russia was saved, and the military Empire overthrown. One consolation was experienced at that moment by the young equerry of the King of Rome, Phillippe de Breteuil did not accompany his master! The Count remained with the army, for the discharge of duties so dangerous, difficult, and distasteful, that he would have been almost content to exchange for them the society of his wife and father-in-law; and quite content to have beheld the Emperor, his benefactor, roasted in the Kremlin, or frozen on the plain of Borodino, so that the sacrifice might emancipate his own precious person from its present privations.

The rumor of these national mischances struck a heavy blow at Armentieres. A mournful mistrust prevailed in the little household; and one day, as Madame de Breteuil was sitting between her father and foster-mother, her hands folded desparingly on her knees as she listened to the peevish murmurs of the old people, the gallop of a horse was heard to cease suddenly in the courtyard; and Leon, pale with emotion and exhausted with fatigue, stood amongst them. The case was too urgent to admit of deference towards the feelings of its feeble inmates. A fatal truth was to be told, and quickly.

"All is lost!" he exclaimed, in a hoarse voice, leading apart Madame de Breteuil from the rest. "The Allies are everywhere triumphant, and the Prussians within a day's march of Armentieres!"

"Within two days' march of Paris!" cried Margaret, losing sight of her own dangers in the humiliation of her country.

"Within a day's march of Armentieres—do you hear me, Margaret?—within a day's march of Armentieres!" cried her friend; "and I cannot remain here to defend you. I have hazarded all that is left me—my honor—to secure this brief interview. The Emperor, my father's benefactor and my own, is on the brink of ruin. My place is by his

side; my sword should be with him. Margaret, I am come to bid you farewell—and to tell you, ere I rush into this last struggle, that, if I fall, *you* must be my heir." And, taking a parchment from his vest, he placed it in her cold and motionless hands.

Old Guillot whose ear had caught the announcement of the arrival of the Prussians, now hobbled towards them, to interpose his lamentations and inquiries.—What was to be done? Were they to resist, or submit to be burned, sacked, and pillaged, with Christian fortitude? Or, were they to hang out, as their betters were doing on all sides, the flag of truce—(God save the mark!)—the *drapeau blanc* of the Bourbons?

"Rather with my own hand apply a lighted brand to the foundations of my father's house!" exclaimed his indignant master. But, as Leon spoke, his eye fell upon the noble figure of Margaret, with all its womanly beauties—her large, fair, pensive forehead and thoughtful cheeks rendered still more dazzlingly pale by the contrast of the luxuriant bands of raven hair bound closely round her finely formed head. He fancied that she trembled. He fancied that a slight quivering was perceptible round her lips, while she listened to the repeated ejaculations of the old people:—"the Prussians, the Prussians—the barbarous, brutal Prussians!"

Involuntarily, Leon shuddered, and drew a deep breath, as if wanting force to express what next he was about to utter. Then, without withdrawing his eyes from the person of Margaret, he resumed, in a hoarse whisper—"Monsieur Galiand, you have so long been master here that I should be to blame to interfere in this matter. My people, therefore, are at your disposal. Should *the enemy* take Armentieres on their line of march, use any precaution you deem necessary to your own safety and that of your daughter.—Margaret," he continued, in a lower tone, "when yesterday I learned that Breteuil had been among the first to throw aside the tricolor, and desert his regiment, to the conqueror, I exulted—God forgive me!—for I knew such vileness would but augment your hatred and contempt for your husband. Now, therefore, if I follow his footsteps, and give over my father's house to shame, do not *thou*, at least despise me. For the sacrifice is wholly for thee;—for thee,

Margaret, whom I have loved so dearly—for thee, whom, from this hour, I shall behold no more."

Long before Madame de Breteuil recovered her self-possession sufficiently to offer him a word of gratitude, Armentieres had, indeed, disappeared. He had come but to warn and to comfort—he could not stay to defend!—

"What is this?"—muttered old Galiand, picking up the parchment that lay unnoticed at her feet; while Guillot and the gardeners made their preparations, by hastily removing and secreting all articles of value at the Chateau, and, profiting by the instruction of the old man, suspended a prodigious banner, formed of a damask table-cloth, over the grand entrance. "'A deed of bequest to Mary Margaret Countess de Breteuil, of the Chateau d'Armentieres!' A very pretty thought on the part of my young friend at such a moment. But though there is little chance that a rash partisan like Leon will escape so desperate a massacre as must mark the last day's struggle in such a cause as that of France against the world,—still, my dear child, let me beg you not to indulge in any flattering expectations from this will of the Baron. Even should you succeed to the Armentieres estates, they are so heavily encumbered by the mortgages contracted by Leon at the time he so nobly became responsible for me to my creditors, that, were the property sold off, you would be but little the gainer."

"When he became responsible for you to your creditors?" —faltered Margaret, in a tone of inquiry.

"Ay, my dear; at such a time as this, there is no use in keeping the secret; though Monsieur le Baron always made it a great point that you should not be taken into our confidence. But it is as well you should know that I might have ended my days in St. Pelagie, had it not been for the generosity of Armentieres. The engagements in which I found myself involved by the villainy of my partners were such, that nothing short of the promptitude with which our young friend came to my aid could have saved me. The more praiseworthy on his part that he is no capitalist, poor gentleman. Nothing would serve him but he must raise money on his estates to do me service."

"But you will be able to repay him?" inquired Margaret, growing, if possible, paler than before.

"I did think so,—I did hope so. But things have been sinking from bad to worse, and now not a chance remains of the re-establishment of my affairs. To be sure, this will be no surprise to the Baron, for his own are scarcely in better plight? and should he survive the struggle of to-morrow (Margaret hid her face in her hands and groaned aloud) he will probably be compelled, by his mortgagees, to sell the estate of Armentieres;—and, in that case, what will become of *us?*"

"What will become of *us?*—what will become of *him!*" was Margaret's ejaculation, when, having escaped from her father and locked herself into her chamber, she sank upon a chair, to muse over the impending horrors of her position, and arm her courage for the event. The Prussians at hand —her father and herself exposed to their vindictive outrages—her friend about to sacrifice himself for the falling cause! Already, she seemed to hear the uproar of the approaching brigades, riotous with conquest and intemperance. Already she seemed to behold Leon d'Armentieres rushing single-handed and alone against the ranks of the enemies of France—overcome by numbers—bleeding—mangled—crushed—dying among heaps of dead. She pressed her convulsed hands upon her ears and eyes, as if to shut out sounds and sights at present wholly ideal. She gasped for breath; vainly struggling against terrors amounting to agony. At that moment, the disgust with which she was accustomed to contemplate the probability of Breteuil's return was forgotten. Margaret would have borne cheerfully with his insults, to have secured the safety of those she loved,—her father, and him who had been the means of preserving her father's grey hairs from sorrow and disgrace.

"Heaven have mercy on me, and grant me strength, for I must not pray for death—I dare not pray for death!"—she exclaimed, in a concentrated voice, overpowered by the throbbing of every pulse in her excited frame. "No!—this is no moment for me to die! I must exert myself for the sake of my poor old father. I must rally in his defence, as he would have done in mine, before old age palsied his faculties and powers of action. I must live—I must take patience. Yet a while must I bear and suffer. The time is not come for my release."

That night, no eye was closed at Armentieres. The three poor, feeble,aged beings,so insufficient even to their own preservation, trembled with deeper terror when they remembered that Margaret was among them, rather to defend than be defended; and scarcely had the morning dawned, when detachments of peasants from the environs came thronging to the Chateau with tidings that the Prussians were advancing, spreading ruin and desolation on their path. But Margaret was now tranquilized into the calmness of despair. Even when the distant report of the enemy's artillery proclaimed their approach, she did but move her lips in secret prayer; nor stirred—nor broke the silence she had preserved throughout that night of misery. One after another, harbingers of evil rushed in, announcing new disasters, and the rapid progress of the troops; till at length, when their agony was at the utmost, came one with a countenance radiant with joy, crying aloud that the brigade which had been seen bearing down upon Armentieres had made a sudden diversion to the left of the route, so that, avoiding the Chateau, its line of march lay through the valley of Montmorency.—Yes the Chateau and its inhabitants were safe!

Loud and reiterated were the thanksgivings of the helpless old people on receiving the welcome intelligence; yet Margaret smitten with a sad presentiment, found no courage to utter a syllable. The Chateau and its inhabitants were safe; but Breteuil was with the triumphant allies, and Leon, perhaps, with the slain! How were her doubts to be resolved?—When should she obtain further information?

Amid the confusion incident on the march of a conquering army, authentic intelligence was indeed hard to be obtained. Nothing was known with certainty; and all that *was* known appeared fabulous. The investure of Paris—the abdication of the Emperor,—were such things to be credited by those who had so long relied on the ascendant star of Napoleon?

Too speedily, however, and too authentically, was it made known to the unhappy Margaret, that her evil auguries were more than fulfilled;—that the young Baron d'Armentieres had not only fallen, but fallen a recreant and a traitor! Within a few hours of their last interview, Leon was re-

ported to have been seen at the Prussian head-quarters, was said to have undertaken, on certain conditions, to bring over his detachment; and to have been sacrificed by his men at the moment of attempting to shake their fidelity to the Emperor. To obtain more exact details was impossible. Margaret had not even the comfort of knowing in what spot of earth the head she loved was laid in the dust. His name had already become a word of reproach among his men. They admitted that the body had been stripped for burial, when the advance of the enemy caused their position to be suddenly evacuated: what became of the corse of the renegade, they neither knew nor cared.

"So gallant—so noble—yet to die the death of a traitor!" exclaimed Margaret, as she sat, many weeks afterward, resting her heavy head against the trunk of the old lime tree, under whose branches they had so often played of yore, and where they had sat together at her first visit to the Chateau, after her ill-starred marriage. Her heart sickened as she looked upon the summer sky, and felt the lightsome breath of the summer breezes upon her cheek; and remembered that Napoleon was pining in exile and captivity, and his young soldier lying in a dishonoured grave! But, above all, Breteuil was enjoying the fruits of his treachery; and she trembled at the certainty that the letters he had already addressed her must soon be followed by a personal interview, indispensable to determine the relative position they were in future to maintain towards each other. For she had no longer a right to heap upon him the scorn earned by his treachery, now that Leon—her friend, her brother—had gone and done likewise. She dreaded the arrival of the Count more, in fact, from the fear that he might insult the memory of the unfortunate d'Armentieres, than from any personal apprehension of either his love or hatred. Breteuil had already expressed his wish for a legal separation; and, but for the necessities of her father, Margaret would have acceded to his proposal without a single condition. But what was to become of the decripit and destitute old man, now that his benefactor was in the dust? From that epoch of terror, when the arrival of the Prussian troops had been hourly expected, Baron Galiand had been in a state of childishness; and now that the legal

term approached for removing the seals placed by the authorities of the district on the property of Armentieres, on receiving an official announcement of Leon's decease, it became necessary to provide some asylum for the invalid.

Twice did Margaret humiliate herself so far as to address to her husband a representation of the difficulties of her position, and an entreaty for his commands. Breteuil was still silent; and, on the day when the heirs-at-law were to arrive at the Chateau, to sanction with their presence the formalities of the law, Galiand and his daughter took refuge from general observation in a miserable cottage, situated on the verge of the forest, which had been sacked and partly destroyed by a skirmishing party at the passage of the allied troops. It was settled that they were to return at nightfall, and take up their temporary residence with Guillot and his wife; but, long before night, long before even noon, the old porter bustled his way to the hovel in quest of his beloved nursling. Strange tidings awaited her. In examining the valuables hastily moved from their secreting place, and amassed together, to be sealed up by the Juge de Paix, one of the first objects discovered was the will confided by Leon to the unheeding charge of Margaret at their last cruel interview; by virtue of which Madame de Breteuil became sole inheritor of the estates of Armentieres!

"If the old gentleman yonder had been himself," cried Guillot, pointing to Galiand, who sat with drivelling lip and lustreless eye, unconscious of all that was passing around him, "*he* would not have lost sight of the precious document as you, my poor dear child, seem to have done. To be sure we have had trouble enough, since that black morning, to drive everything from our heads. But if you had only given me a hint that the Baron had made over to you the whole of his property——"

"*Did* he make over to me the whole of his property?" demanded Margaret with a bewildered air. "True—I remember now! It was on perusing that will, my father first acquainted me with the extent of our obligations to Leon; it was in perusing that will, I experienced a presentiment that we had parted forever. But from that hour to this, the noble bequest of Leon has never crossed my mind."

"In the confusion of the moment, the old Baron must

have placed the parchment, for security, among the other family archives," said Guillot; "and thus, Heaven be thanked, it has come to light."

After the momentary exultation consequent on finding herself preserved from want, and able to secure to her father's old age an asylum for which she was again indebted to the generosity of her only friend, Margaret half regretted the discovery of the will. First, came the murmurs and reproaches of the surviving relatives of Leon; next, the conciliatory advances of her husband. It appears that Breteuil, though largely benefitted by the fruits of his treason, found both places and pensions insufficient for the maintenance of his prodigal libertinism; and no sooner were the Countess's claims fully established, than he made his appearance at the Chateau—prepared, since conciliation had proved unavailing,—to go all lengths in the exercise of his authority.

"Your friend the Baron (for *friend*, I suppose, I must in courtesy continue to call him) seems, madam to have very imperfectly studied your interests," observed he, with the coolest contempt; "since his disposal of the Armentieres estates was executed in ignorance that, by his form of conveyance, the husband of his mistress, and not herself, is entitled to their enjoyment."

"My friend, the Baron, probably considered," replied Margaret, without deigning to notice the implied insult, "that a virtual separation having taken place between us, Count Philippe de Breteuil would scorn to participate in a bequest of so peculiar a nature."

"He must have thought me, then, a greater ass than the sequel will prove!"—cried Breteuil, with a forced laugh. "My marriage has been too bitter a pill for me to dispense with the gilding now afforded. Defrauded of the inheritance promised by your father, this pitiful estate must assist in filling up the deficit. I learn, indeed, from my lawyer," he continued, fixing a significant look upon Margaret, "that deeds are in existence, establishing your father's liability to the amount of certain mortgages hampering the estate; and that I, as husband of the universal legatee, am become the creditor of Monsieur Galiand. It depends upon yourself, madam, to render me a lenient one."

"That Leon should have sacrificed life and honour for

the preservation of this property, in order to cast it away upon the man whom he despised!" exclaimed Madame de Breteuil, irritated beyond all self-control by the baseness of her husband's threats.

"Are you so complete an idiot as to imagine," retorted Breteuil, "that it was only to preserve his old rat-hole of a Chateau, that d'Armentieres sold himself to the Prussians? You know better! You are fully aware that the chaste wife of his friend was the object of his generous solicitude. Yes!" added he, stamping with fury as he spoke—"yes! you are perfectly aware that, had his Margaret been in a place of safety, the Prussians might have used the foundations of his father's hearth for paving-stones for aught he cared. *You—you* were the cause of his death—*you* the cause of his shame, as you are now of mine!"—

A flood of tears—the first she had shed since her misfortunes—came to the relief of Madame de Breteuil. Leon was acquitted—Leon was guiltless! What had she done to become the object of so dear, so rooted a devotion? or what had she done to incur the calamity of losing so true a friend?

But her position admitted not of indulgence in such emotions. Many as had been her earthly trials, she felt that more awaited her. Breteuil was little inclined to neglect so advantageous an opportunity of establishing himself in the favour of a certain portion of the community, as by the possession of a fine *chateau de chasse* in the neighbourhood of Paris. His present object was to make Armentieres his residence, as a pretext for absenting himself from a court where he was regarded with mistrust; little doubting that his wife would be content to come to terms of compromise, accepting a sufficient maintenance for herself and her father, on condition of his undertaking to liquidate the incumbrances of the Armentieres estate. But the noble Margaret, ever ready to sacrifice her feelings to the claims of others, acquainted him that the impossibility of removing her infirm father from a home which habit rendered dear and familiar, would compel her to the painful necessity of remaining under the same roof with him; and, though arrangements were made to prevent all further intercourse between them, Breteuil was at small pains to conceal his disappointment at her tenacity.

He resolved to weary out, by a series of petty personal annoyances, the patience of one whose mind he could not bend, whose heart he could not break. Persuaded that the determination of Margaret to remain at Armentieres originated in her attachment for her dead lover more than for her living father, he strove to wound her feelings in every point which the memory of Leon rendered vulnerable. Assuming with the utmost rigour, the masterhood conceded him by the laws, he caused all the favourite horses of the Baron to be sold, the favourite dogs to be destroyed. The old servants of the family were ignominiously dismissed. Even Guillot and his grey-headed wife were thrust out from the place which a location of fifty years seemed to have consecrated as their own. But Margaret beheld all in silence. She knew that remonstrance or reproach would but aggravate the evil; and that Philippe de Breteuil acknowledged no moral responsibility either to Heaven above or man below.

Such were the destinies of Margaret—the fearful fruit of a disorganized frame of society!—

"What but misery could spring from a marriage so disproportionate as mine?" faltered the high-minded Countess, as she roamed through the gardens, now grown cheerless in her eyes. "Nature was outraged by such a compact, and my death alone will make atonement. A few short months, and my father will drop into the grave; when I shall be free to lay my head beside his hoary hairs. For so short a space, surely this man might leave me unmolested! I challenge not his rights—I resist not his encroachments—I oppose not his authority. Let him but refrain from insulting the dead—from desecrating all that is hallowed in my eyes by the memory of Leon—and the estate of Armentieres will soon be at his disposal."

Wandering in sorrowful meditation, the steps of Margaret gradually traversed the pleasure-grounds. Having crossed the brook, she entered the shady pathways of those hanging woods where Leon and herself had enjoyed together so many a solitary hour. Her father was, as usual, sleeping away his afternoon; Breteuil and a company of guests were off to the chase in an opposite direction; and the unhappy woman felt doubly at liberty to enjoy her only remaining solace—the free light and free air of heaven, in

solitude and silence. Pausing here and there, to dwell upon reminiscences of happier times, or to pluck a flower from the very root which had once appeared to throw up its silvery blossoms for her delight and the delight of one who must behold them no more, the Countess found herself at length resting against the stem of a shattered tree, close beside the isolated hovel in which she and her father had taken refuge on the day of the arrival of the judges of the district.

"Better, perhaps, had the will never been found!" she exclaimed, flinging a careless glance upon the blackened walls. "Were the natural heirs of Leon possessors here, would *they* have driven forth his poor to perish?—Would *they* have dismissed his faithful servants, or slain his faithful dog?—Better had the will never been found!"—

And with the restlessness of feelings ill at ease, Margaret was about to enter the cottage, when she perceived, with surprise, that the door, usually hanging shattered upon its hinges, was carefully closed. She applied her hand to the lock, to ascertain the cause of so strange a circumstance; but, lo! the door was barred and bolted within.

Attributing the change to some caprice on the part of the Count de Breteuil, Margaret was about to quit the spot and pursue her lonely wanderings, when, fixing her eyes inquiringly upon the dilapidated building as she regained the path, she heard the lock grate as with a turning key, and saw the door slowly open upon its hinges. Yet no one came forth—no one was visible—and a cold dew of terror rose upon the brow of the Countess, as the mystery seemed to involve itself in supernatural agency. To fly the place, was her only resource. But she seemed rooted to the spot; and when, as she stood with her eyes riveted on the building, she fancied she could discern her name pronounced in hoarse accents from within, a paroxysm of bewilderment seemed to inspire her. She rushed back to the hovel and crossed its blackened threshold.

"Margaret!" murmured a hollow voice, while a gaunt arm extended itself, and the door was violently closed and eagerly barred behind her—"Margaret! are you come at last?"

"Yes, I am come!" she replied, gazing with awe upon

that which she held to be the apparition of her departed friend. "I am come to lay my head cheerfully beside you in the grave. Nor had I tarried so long, but for the desolation of my poor friendless father."

"Margaret!" faltered anew the voice of Leon d'Armentieres, as he flung back the matted locks from his wasted face, which the imperfect light, glimmering through the shuttered windows, scarcely enabled her to discern—"I know that I am unworthy to stand before you; that I am one whose name is blotted out from the memories of honourable men. But if I betrayed my annointed sovereign, and spat upon the cause of the country I had sworn to serve, it was for *your* sake,—for yours whom, at the cost of honour and principle, I redeemed from a destiny worse than death! For *you* I trafficked with the enemy;—and speedy was my retribution! Attacked by my men—wounded—stunned—breathless—the peasants who snatched me from death harboured me under their roof from week to week, indifferent to my name or nature. The common tie of humanity sufficed them. On that field, expired my better life. Henceforward the name of Leon d'Armentieres is with the dead; and the heart that loves you, Margaret;—ay, that loves you still, though crushed by shame, and feeble with long months of agony and danger,—is that of a nameless outcast; who has dragged himself hither but to look upon you again, and prostrate himself before you for one last word of pardon and pity!"—

As with slow and languid utterance these declarations proceeded from the parched lips of the haggard wretch before her, Margaret drew gradually nearer to him, fixed a more piercing gaze upon his face, and lent a more eager ear to those feeble accents; till conviction and transport came at once, and an hysterical shriek burst from the depths of her heart, as she cried aloud that Leon was restored to her—that the breath of life was, indeed, in his nostrils, and the yearning of human affection in his heart!—

"You are come to resume your rights," cried she exultingly. "You are come to diffuse happiness—to dispense justice. The poor and the aged, the sick and the sorrowing, will bless the day that restores you to the home of your fathers!"—

"I am come for none of this, my Margaret," answered Leon, mildly. "He who would diffuse happiness, must have peace within his own bosom. He who would dispense justice, must have a conscience free from reproach. The name which has become a byword among men, must never more presume to connect itself with the awards of virtue."

"Mean you," cried Margaret, receding from his clasping arms, "that you abandon to the caprices of Monsieur de Breteuil the poor who have laboured for you, or even the hound that has fawned upon you ?—You cannot be so heartless—so poor of spirit !"

"Despise me, since it needs must be so," replied the broken-hearted man, falling on the bench from which he had arisen on her approach to the cottage; "for I do, indeed, want courage to brave the revilings of my brethren in arms —the scorn of the humble soldier, whose fidelity to his master raises him so high above me ! I have severed myself from the past !—Much anguish, nights of delirium, seem to have divided me from my very self. The sole portion to which I cling, is the remembrance of Margaret ! of Margaret, for whom I abjured all that might have bound me to life. My determination is taken ! I am about to quit France. Self-condemned to the destiny of Cain, I will bear my burthen of remorse to another hemisphere ! But I felt that it was not denied me to look on you again ere I departed ; and I came hither, Margaret, in the shadow of night,—I took refuge in this desolate place,—I have lingered here three days, three nights, without rest, without food, trusting that chance would bring you hither, or enable me to seek your presence. I am exhausted now—miserably exhausted. Had you delayed till another day, you might have found me lifeless here,—my unclosed eyes still turned towards the home of my fathers, the walls that contain all that is dear to me on earth."

"Return with me openly to the Chateau," said Margaret, firmly. "Be yourself, Leon !—Rise superior to the sport of circumstances. In an hour of mad excitement, you sinned against your better reason. In calm afterthought, you have repented—have made atonement. The past will be forgotten, your frailty forgiven. Return with me, and resume your rights !"—

"Never murmured her companion. "Under the domination of the Bourbons, France is no country for *me*. *You* may overlook my faults—I will not hazard the contumely of others!"—

"Return with me," persisted Margaret. "Return, my friend—my champion—my brother! Did you know how I have been trampled on—did you know what misery is heaped on my head——"

"Come thou rather, then, with *me!*" interrupted Leon, seizing her hands, and pressing them to his bosom. "Come with me to the land of labor and content. *There*, Margaret—there we will create anew an honorable name—there we shall be happy—there——"

"There we should be *self*-condemned, even as here condemned by the sentence of mankind," replied Margaret, extricating herself from his embraces. "Would you have me despise *you*—would you have me despise *myself*—even as I despise and detest such things as Philippe de Breteuil? No, Leon! Still let me love and reverence you as a dear and most devoted friend—as one for whom I would lay down my life, or with whom I would as gladly share it, could our union subsist without a crime. But you are faint," cried she, perceiving that his head drooped lower upon his bosom. "You need food—you want repose. Leon—dear Leon—lean on me. To the Chateau—to the Chateau!"

Fruitless were her exhortations. The excitement produced by their re-union once tranquillized, D'Armentieres sank slowly on the ground, overpowered by fatigue, inanition, fever, and pain. Reluctant as she was to leave him in such a condition, Margaret felt that her only chance of preserving his life was to hasten back to the house to procure aid and nourishment; and, whispering a few words of encouragement in his scarcely conscious ear, she hurried from the place, recrossed the brook, and, with incredible speed, regained the Chateau.

The first person she encountered on entering the courtyard, was the Count de Breteuil! Uttering a scarcely intelligible excuse, she broke from him, to provide herself with wine and other restoratives. But the suspicions of Breteuil being excited by her incoherence, he insisted on an explanation; refusing to lose sight of her till she made an ar-

confession of the cause of her agitation. There was no alternative. Delay must be fatal to Leon. She told all.—She implored the assistance of Breteuil,—she threw herself on his mercy!

But for the intense agitation manifested by his wife, Breteuil would probably have regarded her miraculous narrative as the coinage of a disordered mind. But there was no mistrusting the irrepressible emotion of Margaret. He doubted not for a moment that Leon still lived, and had returned to claim his own.

"You say truly—not a moment must be lost!" he exclaimed, drawing her suddenly into the vaulted chamber which served as the domestic chapel of the Chateau. And, in a moment, the Countess discovered that she had fallen into a snare—that she was a prisoner—that the secret of Leon was in the keeping of his deadliest enemy! Vainly did she shriek for help—vainly tear her hair, and call for mercy! The chapel stood apart from the house; no one heard—no one heeded. The heavy minutes lenghthened into hours. The evening light from the lofty windows proclaimed the close of day; and Margaret felt that the fate of Leon was by that time decided! To the impassionate state of excitement under which, she had been laboring, succeeded, at length, a heavy stupor. In her intervals of consciousness she perceived that food was set beside her—that a mattrass had been placed for her on the marble floor.

At length, she heard footsteps approaching the door, and starting up, strove to smooth her disordered dress, and bind back her dishevelled hair. But when the infamous Breteuil, followed by several strangers, entered the chapel, unable to restrain herself, she rushed towards him, and demanded, with frantic violence, what he had done with her friend,—whether Leon yet lived, and lived for her.

"You perceive, gentlemen," said Breteuil, addressing himself to his companions, "that my statement was not exaggerated. A more confirmed case of mental aberration never manifested itself. Before, however, you remove this unhappy lady to the asylum at Charenton, I could wish you to examine her case more particularly. You will find her insist that the unfortunate Baron d'Armentieres (who, as you all know, fell a victim six months ago in the neighborhood

of Montereau) is still alive and inhabiting this Chateau. She will tell you that she saw him yesterday," he continued, disengaging from his sleeve the grasping hands of Margaret, and turning away from the expressive glance fixed by her dark eyes upon his face.

"And is your villany equal to this?"—she ejaculated, perceiving in a moment the drift of his assertions.

"You will, I trust, be gentle in your treatment, gentlemen," resumed Breteuil, preparing to quit the room. "This lady merits every deference,—every consideration at your hands."

He went;—and Margaret trusted that, during his absence her simple history would suffice to enlighten the professional judges to whom her case was entrusted. But to her grief and dismay, she perceived that every word she uttered, yielding confirmation to their preconceived idea, served only to establish the evidence of her insanity.

"Poor creature,—poor unhappy young creature!" exclaimed the elder of the physicians. "It is her fixed desire, I perecive, to take us with her to the hovel, where she declares this Baron (doubtless some former lover) to be concealed. Let us indulge her caprice. The concession may assisit our conjectures as to the probable duration of her malady,"

"Now, then," thought Margaret, "all is safe, and my rationality established. I shall be set at liberty—at liberty to seek out Leon!"

But on conducting them through the gardens to the fatal cottage, the Countess noticed, as she approached, that the door was once more ajar.

"He is gone!" she cried, clasping her hands. "Many days and nights have elapsed since the scene I described to you. Heaven grant he may have so far recovered as to have escaped this place!"

She paused on the threshhold. A sickening chill came over her. Not a trace of Leon was there! Breteuil, who now joined the party, cast significant glances at the doctors. as if to point out the authentication of his previous statements. But Margaret observed that his eye unquietly followed hers, as she pursued her investigations; and, noting the uneasiness of his looks, she fancied he turned pale as

she approached a certain spot of the chamber in which she had found and left Leon d'Armentieres.

"Behold!" cried she to her companions, "here are traces of a struggle on the trampled ground,—here are blood spots,—here is human hair scattered about! And, lo! this fragment of dark grey cloth—I can swear to it as part of the tattered dress worn by my ill-fated friend! I understand it all! Leon has been murdered, ay, *murdered.*"

"You hear her?" observed Berteuil, with a mournful wave of the head. "She is becoming violent again. Coercion, I fear, may be once more necessary. The sooner, therefore, she is removed from this place, and permanently established under your care, the better for her health and comfort."

"You will not surely take me hence without further examination?" shrieked Margaret, as they were about to lead her from the cottage. "Let the worst be ascertained. I swear to you that Leon has been assassinated! His remains cannot be far from hence. Let the wood be searched—let the ground be dug up."

"She will injure herself by this violence!" said Breteuil mildly. "Carry her, therefore, to the carriage, and instantly away to Charenton. It is too severe a trial to behold my unfortunate wife in this condition."

* * * * *

Such is the strange eventful history it was my fortune to hear on visiting some years ago the lunatic asylum at Charenton. The beautiful woman by whom it was recounted to me, was evidently pining away into the grave. All her cry was for justice,—justice against the murderer of Leon, justice against her husband!

The illusions possessing the brain of the unfortunate Margaret, were of course met only by more rigorous treatment on the part of her keepers; for Count Philippe de Breteuil her husband is one of the most popular men in existence, and has served with distinction in a recent administration of the present government.

Nothing can exceed the sympathy testified towards him on account of the infirmity of his wife.

"There was probably insanity pre-existing in her family," say they. "However, he deserves some punishment for

having condescended to such a *mesalliance*! The idea of an obscure nobody,—a Margaret Galiand,—a girl without a grandfather,—being snatched out of her humble sphere to become the Wife of an Aristocrat!"

# NEIGHBOR GREY AND HER DAUGHTER.

Among the vestiges of Papistry still perceptible in England, is the dedication of every town and village to some patron saint. This latent influence of a "creed outworn," assumes, however, a very harmless shape; by fixing the epochs of fairs and feasts,—of fairs which tend to the annual or bi-annual recreation of our towns, and of feasts which serve to gather together, once a year, the scattered tribes of our villages. Neither France nor Belgium is more punctilious in keeping up the *fetes, ducasses, or kermesses* of its hamlets and villages, than the northern districts of England!—

It was at Falkstone Feast that the simple heart of Mary Gray became very unexpectedly exposed to the seductions of a London suitor. Falkstone is a pretty village on the confines of Nottinghamshire; which, every November,—just as its soil becomes glutinized into the consistency of pitch, and the little brook by which it is traversed swells so as to render the lower grounds impassable,—rewards itself for the arrival of winter and typhus fever by celebrating its annual feast, dedicated, in the olden time, as well as its parish church, to the cloak-rending saint, St. Martin; and solemnized, in latter times, with considerable slaughter of

fatted calves, and a massacre of half the fowls and turkeys of the barnyards of the neighborhood.

Every 11th of November, down come flitches and hams from housewifely chimneys. Barrels of beer are broached in the richer farms; long-hoarded and long-bearded bottles of currant or cowslip wine are brought forth; a glorious confusion of pork-pies and apple-pies steams in the oven; and scarce a hut or hovel in Falkstone so wanting in means or public spirit, as not to show a well-scoured deal table covered with some sort of cheer, from the well-spiced round of pressed beef, down to a barley-loaf and angle of pale-faced Derby cheese,—in order to welcome from afar the kinsfolk and acquaintance, the hundredth cousins or neighbors' children, who repair, for the annual renewal of such associations, to the clayey parish, constituting what is called their "native soil." The custom is as good as it is old. Patriotism is the natural growth of such attachments. As the abounding river is fed by tributary streamlets, love of parish, county, country, form an inevitable gradation of patriotic virtue.

Twenty years ago, Falkstone was so fortunate as to boast of four Tritons among its fifteen hundred minnows. The manor was let off in small farms. None of the inhabitants were very wealthy, none of them very poor; and, consequently, as few of them subject to the pangs of envy as the infirmities of human nature would allow. The homely old church boasted not a single pew whose hassocks were covered with a nobler tissue than rush matting; and, excepting one very severe winter, not a Christian was known to have died of want in the place. This, considering that the rector was a non-resident, and that Falkstone boasted no squire's family to parade its Christmas dole of coals and blankets, is as much as can be expected of any decent parish of modern times.

Among the poorer inhabitants, was a widow woman known by the name of Neighbor Gray. "Neighbor," by the way, is a title of honor peculiar to village life. Stiff-necked Grosvenor square disdains the bonds of neighborship; and, even in country towns, people are beginning to ignore the existence of the regard derivable a century ago from similar propinquities. But in places such as Falkstone, a neighbor (in the worldly as well as the Christian sense of the word) still

implies one who is to be loved as thyself; one who has a claim for succor and support; one whose sheep you are to assist in pulling out of a ditch; whose sicknesses you are to aid in nursing, and whose offspring you are to save from oppression. In Falkstone, after slaving all day in the harvest-field, you would be expected to sit up at night with a sick "neighbor," who had none other to "do for her;" just as, in Grosvenor square, it would be a breach of politeness even to inquire after the health of a dying next-door neighbor, on whose visiting-list your name has not been previously inscribed—so officious an act exposing you to the opprobrious suspicion of trying to force an acquaintance with the inmates.

Neighbor Gray, to her honor be it spoken, had never been known at Falkstone under any other denomination: she was neither Mrs. Gray in her husband's life-time, nor Widow Gray after his decease; nor was even old age and misery likely to reduce her to the ignominy of "Goody"—for she was a friendly, serviceable woman, who had done much to merit her distinction; having acquired as much popularity by the kind-hearted activity with which she lent a hand at neighbor's baking, brewing, washing, or scrubbing, as ever was obtained by the dinners of a noble lord, boasting a French cook with a salary doubling that of the curate of Falkstone. Neighbor Gray was, accordingly, a very happy woman. She lay down to rest every night, rich in the good-will of every soul to whom her name was familiar.

Of her two children, Dick, the elder, had died in his apprenticeship, while Mary lived with her mother,—a pretty, delicate girl, too pretty and too delicate for the stirring duties likely to fall to her lot; for hard service was the only prospect of Mary Gray. In order to lay by something for her mother's old age (who, as a poor widow disdaining parish aid, had been able to lay by nothing for herself,) Mary must inevitably look out for a place as soon as she should attain her seventeenth year, and some degree of strength and self-reliance. But Mary had no means of reaching London, where her prettiness and gentility might pass for qualifications; and the farmers' wives had little mind to en-

gage a poor slip of a girl, who looked as if she had scarcely strength to turn a mangle or handle a churn.

For the sake of Neighbor Gray, so good a char-woman in her time, they gave her daughter employment in needle-work; but Mary was able to earn little more than her day's food; and this was the more lamentable, because her mother was showing symptoms of infirmity. A clay floor in a damp village, and hard labor fourteen hours a-day, are as apt to bring on premature old age as the enervation of hot rooms and fashionable vigils; and want of sufficient nourishment is as hard a pull upon the constitution as those evil results which the President of the College of Physicians denounces to the lordly epicure his patient, from a course of turtle and venison. Mary saw that her mother would soon need her assistance, and promised herself that, at the next Statute, she would certainly attempt to put herself forward in life.

Previous, however, to the Statute, unluckily came Falkstone Feast; and Neighbor Gray having been engaged to aid in the grand preparations at Welland's farm, was invited to bring her daughter and share in the general entertainment during the three days of the Feast. Open house was kept; and, on the third night, the festivities were to end with a supper and dance in Farmer Welland's barn, at which nearly all the inhabitants of Falkstone were to be present. Neighbor Gray figured, for that night only, in the gown of gay glazed calico in which, every feast since her wedding-day, she had made her annual appearance; and Mary thought herself almost too fine in a new stuff gown, spun by the hands of her mother, and sewed by her own. Both were very happy. Mary's eyes were bright with girlish joyousness, and her usually pale cheeks flushed with the excitement of the season; while Neighbor Gray was sufficiently happy in hearing from so many old friends, become strangers by long absence from the village, what a pretty lass little Mary had turned out; and knowing that most of the guests gathered together at Falkstone, pronounced her daughter to be the queen of the village. Nor were Mary's ears less attentive than those of her mother. Admiration flushed her cheek to a yet brighter blush, and lighted up a still more brilliant sparkle in her eyes; and when she found

herself chosen as a partner for the opening of the ball, by "a young gentleman from Lon'on, visiting at the farm"—an object of contention to all the coquettes of the village, —poor Mary smiled a smile well worthy of a London beauty.

William Harding, the young gentleman from Lon'on, who was visiting Falkstone in company with the young nephew of old Welland, and heir to his property, seemed to consider it his duty to make up in courtesy and vivacity for the taciturn reserve of Frank Welland; who was what is called in England, among the great, high; among the little, odd-tempered; and what ought to be called, among great, little, and middle-sized, *shy*. Shyness is in fact one of the most prevalent national peculiarities of our countrymen; taking various shapes, according to station and estate, but insuring the common consequence of rendering the sufferer an object of dislike instead of commiseration. Frank Welland, even in his native village, passed for a disagreeable, sulky young man; while William Harding was voted, by general acclamation, a good fellow, before he had been four-and-twenty hours in the place. He sang a good song, told a good story; and, when he stood up to dance with Mary, they made as pretty a couple as had ever been seen in Falkstone. It was only Neighbor Gray (who had been present at Frank Welland's birth and helped to lay his parents in the grave) that inclined in favor of the stern, sullen, hard-featured youth, who stood silently looking on, disdaining to join in the dance—some said, because he was too proud, some, because he was too good, but, in reality, because he was too shy.

William Harding, meanwhile, was not only free from any such infirmity; but the necessity of making from an early age his own way in the world, had impressed upon his mind the conviction that popularity is one of the stepping-stones to advancement. He had not naturally a bad disposition; but, without parents to turn his good ones to account, the germs withered for want of sunshine. Reared by the family of a distant relation to which he was a burthen, William Harding grew up prudent instead of virtuous. Character, not excellence, was his aim in life; and, just as he saw his cousin, the Cheapside mercer, insist upon the advantage of

a good surface to his silks and satins as an equally vendible quality with the more costly one of solid consistency, William came to regard reputation as the one thing needful, both in public and private life. Some people talk, in all awkward emergencies, of "putting a good face on the matter;" William Harding's course consisted in putting a good face upon life.

It was perhaps the unpopularity of his friend Frank Welland (who officiated, first as clerk, and next as junior partner, in a small house of business adjoining the large one of his own wealthy relative) which first roused his attention to the prudence of being agreeable; and all that Neighbor Gray performed at Falkstone, out of the abundance of her warm feelings and Christian principles, was done in Cheapside by William Harding as a matter of calculation. He had computed the per. centage likely to be returned by his good offices; and proved so adroit a moral arithmetician, that his cheery fortnight at Welland's farm was the repayment of his attentions to Frank during a long illness the preceding winter. Even of the relations by whom, as an awkward boy, he had been disliked as a burthen, he contrived, between fifteen and twenty, to render himself a favourite. He was so useful, so civil, so attentive! It was the fate of the rich mercer to outlive his children, with the exception of one puny daughter; and already it was predicted in the city, that old Harding would eventually bestow Sophia and her fortune upon the kinsman who was so useful to him in his business, and so comfortable to him in his domestic life; or, if the young lady chose otherwise, that the business in Cheapside, at least, would descend to William Harding. At present, however, he was still on probation. Sophy was only sixteen, and William, at four-and-twenty, still a shopman with a good salary. He might either be discarded on the morrow, or promoted to be the son-in-law of his master.

Such was the state of things at the period of his visit to Welland's farm; which visit, much as he seemed to enjoy it, was a matter of calculation. William thought his relation slow in pressing his advancement; and, fancying that old Harding, from whose side, for ten years past, he had never been separated half as many days, might be stimulated by his absence to a higher appreciation of his utility, humbly

requested leave to accompany his bosom friend, Frank Welland, into Notts.

"Why what can Frank Welland be wanting to leave town for, at this stirring season, just as the winter orders are coming in?" demanded the matter-of-fact mercer of Cheapside.

"He is going, sir, to visit the uncle who brought him up." The mercer sneered.

"The uncle, sir, whose property is coming to him."

"Ay, ay? and why does he choose such a time of year as this? Why can't he go, pray, in August or September, when town's thin and business slack?"

"Falkstone Feast, it seems, sir, takes place at Martinmas, when it is the custom of the country for the families of the place to meet together."

"And do you belong to one of the families of the place?"

"Frank Welland is desirous to make me known to *his*. There will be a great deal of merry-making going forward; and, as you have always thought well of Frank, sir, and expressed yourself willing that we should be friends together, I consider the opportunity a good one to afford myself a little recreation."

"Recreation in a farm house in a rainy November! Pretty recreation! Pretty moment for the country! There hasn't been a leaf on the tree in St. Paul's Churchyard this fortnight past."

"Certainly, sir, if you cannot spare me," rejoined William, "I shall not think of pressing my request."

"If you want amusement, why can't you go to the playhouses?" remonstrated old Harding. "I'm sure you seemed gay enough, t'other night, at the club."

"A little change of air and scene," William began.

"Oh, go! *go* if you like. *I* don't want to hinder you," replied old Harding, testily. "If you find pleasure in the company of that sulky young fellow, Frank Welland, I wish you joy of your taste. Your cousin Sophy will be home from school in six weeks, and then——"

"I shall be back, sir, in less than *two*," interrupted William; "and if my going is likely to be the least inconvenience to the business, I shall be most happy to give up the excursion altogether."

"Inconvenience! Why, what have Clark and Wilkinson to do but attend to their duties? Wilkinson is the steadiest young man that ever entered my shop, and no one better understands his business than Clark. No! make the best of your way to Falkstone Feast, and let me hear no more about the matter."

William was now almost inclined to withdraw his petition. But it was too late. The old gentleman insisted that he should go; and the young one could only hope that his kinsman was finessing as well as himself; and that, instead of according his confidence to the smug, smooth, demure Gabriel Wilkinson, he would become hourly more sensible of the loss of a relative to whom alone, of all the house, he accorded unlimited confidence.

To Falkstone, therefore, the two young men repaired by the night coach; and, though William Harding had not been sufficiently misled by the rhapsodies of his usually silent and reserved companion, to expect great things of the village and farm which were *home* to Frank, he was careful not to betray to those who welcomed him so warmly, his amazement that persons in their right minds could prefer living in a place whose ways were so miry, and whose homesteads so mean. William at heart a pure Cockney, languished after the wide pavements and radiant gas of Cheapside. He could not comprehend the hearty shake of the hand bestowed by Frank Welland upon Neighbor Gray. Neighbor Gray appeared to *him* only a foolish old charwoman: the only thing he saw to admire in her was a calimanco petticoat of a peculiar quality—"a stuff that had been out of make in the trade for the last twenty years."

The nature of the country-bred youth soon broke out in Frank, and the day following his arrival, he was out with his uncle in a survey of the farm; and the day following (as the hounds met within four miles' distance) mounted a favourite mare bred on the farm, and was not at home again till some hours after dark. But William Harding displayed no similiar propensities. William loitered with the lasses about the village, entering into the sports and gossipings of the place; and, in eight-and-forty hours, had completely established his popularity among those who, in spite of the commendations of Farmer Welland and Neighbor Gray,

persisted in considering Master Frank as a very *unked* young gentleman, who did little honour to his London breeding. They saw too much of sportsmen to care for his manliness, and too little of fine gentlemen to regard the courteous deportment of William Harding as anything short of the pink of the London mode.

The young men were to spend ten days at Falkstone; the first week of which, was chiefly engrossed by the hospitalities of the Feast. The last three days were passed by Frank in visiting and bidding adieu to his various kinsfolk; and it was on the day preceding their departure—which they had agreed to devote to a walk across the country, to dine at the house of a young farmer, with whom, during the recent festivities, they had formed a friendship,—that Frank, so taciturn in company, began suddenly to wax garrulous in descanting on his future prospects.

"If my uncle would but make up his mind to bring matters between us to a settlement!" cried he. "Like most old people, he likes to keep a hard grip on his property to the last minute, and a close tongue concerning his intentions of disposing it. As far as he has ever told me, the 800*l.* laid out to establish me in business, is all I am to expect from him; but, as he has no relations but myself, I am pretty sure of coming into what he has to leave."

"Of course, to be sure," replied William, whose thoughts were elsewhere; "and, as you are getting on so well in life, you can afford to wait."

"No, I can't," was the blunt reply of Frank. "I want to get away from London altogether."

"Away from London? Why, I thought that, when old Grimstone died, you were to come into the whole business?"

"And so I am. But I care nothing for the business."

"Nothing for the business? Didn't you tell me that, last year, it returned you seventeen per cent., and that you have a year's orders before you!"

"*Eighteen!* But what is that to the purpose? I hate London—I have always hated it; and now the prospect of returning there makes me detest it more than ever."

"You surprise me!" cried his companion. "Independent as you are——"

"I am *not* independent, since my uncle insists upon my

sticking to business," replied Frank. "My uncle gave me a good country education, brought me up with country tastes and habits; and when everybody at Falkstone thought he was going to settle me at home, to assist and succeed him in the farm as my father would have done had he survived, he bundles me off to London, and plants me behind a counter—a thing that, by nature, I was never made for."

"He wanted you, perhaps, to see something of life?"

"He wanted to get me out of the way. The old gentlemen likes to be master at home; and, when I rebelled against being driven off to town like a beast to Smithfield market, told me outright he would not have a grown-up nephew shoving him out of his place before his time; and that he did not mean to take off his shoes till he went to bed."

"Well, if you make sure of having the shoes when he goes to bed, you ought to be satisfied."

"And so I would. God knows I don't want to deprive the old gentleman of an inch of his property. But, if I am to earn my inheritance by slaving away the best of my days in the smother and noise of the city, I'd rather be a day-laborer at Falkstone."

William Harding looked with a smile of pity upon the innate rustic, so little deserving his prospects of preferment.

"My uncle may live these ten, these fifteen years!" cried Frank, striking his stick harder on the ground, as they trudged on. "It is not for me, to whom he has been so kind a friend, to wish his days shortened."

"The farmer is ten years older than my cousin Harding," observed William, musingly; "yet, you see, *I* do not grumble—*I* am satisfied to wait."

"To be sure you are—because you will marry your cousin Sophy,—live according to your own likings in London, and devote yourself to improve a business which you know will one day be your own. While *I* am not only constrained to a way of life I abhor, but when the time arrives that is to make me my own master, Mary Gray will be an old woman, or, perhaps, availing herself of my absence, be married to another."

It had need of all William Harding's self-command to prevent his stopping short and fixing his eyes on the face of

his companion, as he exclaimed—"Mary Gray! Are you engaged then to marry Mary Gray?"

"We are not even what is called sweethearts," replied Frank, with perfect composure. "When I was last at Falkstone, the girl was but fifteen; and, though I then made a vow to myself that none but she whom I had danced on my knee as a child, should be my wife, I knew that it would anger my uncle even to hint at such a thing. And so, things remain as they were."

"But you know yourself to be as sure of Mary's affections as you are of old Welland's property?"

"I used to think so. Neighbor Gray loves me as a son of her own; and it was but natural Mary should grow up with a liking for her old playmate. But, out of sight, out of mind! Since I have been here this time, I fancy I notice a change in Mary's manner; and, though I can't make out that any one has been courting her during my absence (such a mild, delicate creature as it is, the young fellows hereabouts seem afraid she would not make enough of a housewife for, them, for, in truth, Mary is not strong enough to do much in a family,) still, I can see that I am not so great a favorite as I used to be."

"Perhaps her mother may have doubts about your being in earnest, and have warned the girl to be on her guard," said William, in a confused manner.

"In *earnest?*—on her *guard?*" reiterated Frank. "You don't know Neighbor Gray! There's not a thought of evil or guile in that woman's mind. She's above any such manœuvring notions. If Mary has grown cold, it is because she likes me less than she used; or, perhaps, she hates the the thoughts of a town life as much as I do, and is afraid I might be wanting to marry her at once, and carry her away from her mother."

"I am told she is likely to leave Falkstone without any such interference," observed William, carelessly. "Mrs. Gray, it seems, is in bad circumstances."

"*Neighbor* Gray," amended Frank.

"And Mary is going out to service in a month or two."

"Mary going out to service? Who told you so?"

"It is the common talk of the farm; so that I should

think a settlement in life as the wife of an honest man in a good business——"

"Yes; but *you* know that I cannot make her the wife of an honest man in a good business. Were I to talk of marrying Neighbor Gray's daughter, my uncle would cut me off with a shilling; and what would then become of my mother and sister, whom, you know, it is my duty and happiness to support?"

"Well, well, I meant no offence," replied William. "For my part, think you have no call to think of marrying for the next ten years, when you will be free to follow your own fancies; and, after all, Mary Gray will be but seven-and-twenty."

Nevertheless, before the actual departure of the young men from Falkstone, Frank *did* think it necessary to come to some explanation with the object of his affections. William Harding met them entering together the farm, from the garden, where Mary had been sent to gather herbs by her mother, and where young Welland had made himself so thoroughly understood,that Mary was forced to speak as plainly as himself. So far from accepting his offer of such pecuniary assistance to her mother as would prevent the necessity of her going out to service till the death of old Welland should enable him to make the daughter his wife and the mother his inmate, Mary assured him that Neighbor Gray would disdain being indebted for support to any but her own or her daughter's industry; and that, were he already in possession of Welland's farm, she should decline to become its mistress and his wife.

Frank was not nettled by this declaration—he was deeply hurt; too much hurt, indeed, to confess to his friend and confidant how much he had hazarded, and how much in vain. Once, when, in the course of their journey back to town, William attempted to advert to Neighbor Gray and Mary, Frank replied so abruptly that he had given up all thoughts of her, that there was no possibility of pushing the question.

Meanwhile, William had laid his plans so cunningly as to insure the warmest reception from Harding of Cheapside. He knew that, were the old gentleman apprized of the day of his arrival, he would get up an air of indifference, to pre-

vent the young truant from fancying himself of too much consequence. But, by arriving unexpectedly one evening after tea, when the old gentleman was wearying after his usual antagonist for his game at cribbage, he was sure of being received with open arms as "long-looked-for come at last." In another month, cousin Sophy was at home; and, in the diversions of the holidays—twelfth-cake parties, balls, and pantomimes—enjoyed with the father and cousin, Falkstone appeared to be forgotten.

Time passed on. It was noticed by Clark and Wilkinson, and other small observers, to whom the proceedings of William Harding afforded a matter of interest, that, from the period of their return from Falkstone feast, the two young men were less in each other's company than before. But who could wonder? Frank Welland, always so dry and uncompanionable, was now more morose than ever; and William soon acquired a painful accession to his duties. During his absence in the north, the old mercer had beguiled the tedium of his solitude by consulting a new apothecary, and attempting a sudden change of diet and prescriptions; and was now as ill in earnest as before in fancy, though his daughter was recalled permanently home to become his nurse. The management of the business, too, fell entirely to his hands. Saving one week in the course of the ensuing summer, when he proceeded in person to Nottingham, in the interest of the concern, William was not a moment away from Cheapside. He was evidently doing his utmost to please the old man; and, in spite of the peevishness of age and sickness, fully succeeded

At length Martinmas came round again; and one evening, as William Harding was passing Welland's shop, on his way to his weekly club, he stepped in, for the first time for many months, to chat; inquiring in a careless manner, whether, this Feast, Frank intended to visit Falkstone?

"I am not even invited," was the young man's reply. "My uncle is not quite so fond of my company as old Harding of yours; and once in two years, is as often as he seems inclined to see me at the farm."

Still harping on the subject, William proceeded to a few casual inquiries concerning the Nottinghamshire friends and

acquaintances he had made the preceding year. But Frank could tell him nothing. His uncle was a bad correspondent; and, when he *did* write, dwelt more on the condition of his stock and the prospects of his fields, than upon village news. William even hazarded an express inquiry concerning Neighbor Gray and her daughter; but Frank immediately stopped short. Colouring deeply he seemed to feel it impossible to allude to Mary; and broke off into questions concerning the prevailing rumor of an approaching marriage between William and Miss Harding.

"Yes," replied William assuming a more cheerful tone—"everything is settled. As soon as Sophy enters her eighteenth year, she is to be my wife. Her father gives me up the business, and all the rest is to follow at his death. A fine prospect for one who, like myself, began the world with nothing, and am not yet five-and-twenty."

Three months afterwards, as Frank Welland was listening to the gossiping account given over his counter by some neighbor of the grand doings about to take place at William's wedding, which was fixed for the following week, a letter was put into his hand, which bore the Falkstone postmark, requiring his immediate attendance at the farm, as his uncle had undergone a paralytic attack, and was speechless.

Frank was at Falkstone on the following day; and, after visiting the bedside of the now insensible old man, and learning from the medical attendant that, though his uncle might linger for a few weeks or even months, his recovery was impossible, young Welland noticed several strange faces about the place. Almost mechanically he uttered an inquiry after Neighbor Gray.

"Ah, poor Neighbor Gray!"—replied the venerable dairy-woman to whom his question was addressed—"the old soul has never held up her head since.

"Since what?"

"Since poor Mary's business. Neighbor Gray keeps her bed, Master Frank; and, as the poor soul has no one to look to her, or doctor her, like the farmer here, it's likely sickness 'll get the uppermost."

"But Mary—*Mary*——"

"And, maybe, 'tis the best thing as can happen to the

poor 'oman," persisted the contemporary whose sympathies were enlisted rather with the mother than the daughter; "for what has she too look to in life, now as it's all up with her daughter?"

"What is up with her daughter?—what has happened to Mary?"—interrupted Frank, with unusual impetuosity.

"Such a mother surely as she has been!" continued the dame, raising her hands and eyes; "and to be so rewarded at last!"

And Frank, finding it impossible to worm out of the old woman the information he desired, dashed off out of the house; and, meeting in the farmyard his uncle's favorite herdsman, an intelligent man, for years an inmate of the house, he resumed his inquiries touching Neighbor Gray and her daughter.

"Ah, poor Mary! I'm feared, Master Frank, 'twill turn out a bad business," replied the man.

"What will turn out a bad business? For God's sake speak! I have never heard a word of the matter!"—cried young Welland.

"Why, Lord bless your heart alive, Master Frank, where have you been a-living? Nothen' else was talked of in Falkstone town for a month or more; and, God knows, poor Neighbor Gray has never looked one in the face sin'——"

"Since——

"Sin' Mary was put in jail for child-murder."

"Child-murder?—Mary Gray in jail?"—faltered Frank.

"Well may you be surprised. But you see, Master Frank, older heads than yourn foretold as no good 'ould come out when Mary persisted in setting off to the place he had heard of in Notten'am, in spite of mother and friends, and all as was bound to advise the poor lass. All he had to say in answer was, as there was fourteen pound -year to be arned—and that's wages as is not to be had very day;—and was not to be over-looked by the daughter of poor Neighbor Gray. So away went the girl, sir; nd, being no scholar with her pen, though so good a hand t the needle, she got some un to write home for her, as she ras comfortably settled with a good master and missus, nd to forward a couple of guineas to her mother as she'd

got in the way of arnest. Well, sir, all this was well and good; and Neighbor Gray, though sure enough she was always pining after the girl's company, used to comfort herself by the notion, that, maybe in a year's time, Mary would get leave to come home to Falkstone for a day or two; or, if not, she would make the best of her way to Notten'am for a peep at the lass. But, Lord bless you Master Frank! afore the year was quite at an end, comes news to Justice Snokes, up at Barleywood, to make inquiries at Falkstone concerning one Mary Gray as had been tooked up at Notten'am on suspicion of making away with a alligitinet child."

"Gracious God!" cried Frank. "And the unfortunate creature has been convicted then?"

"The 'sizes don't come on till next week; but, from all as one hears, the poor lass has little chance. And, surely, to think of Neighbor Gray's daughter coming to the gallows! It seems to bring shame upon the whole village."

*The gallows!* Frank Welland clenched his hands till the blood started, and gnashed his teeth for very anguish, as, without hesitation, he took his way to the cottage of Neighbor Gray—*not* for the satisfaction of his misgivings—*not* even with an intention of alluding to the name of Mary—but to afford his mite of consolation to the unhappy old woman who had assisted to watch over his infancy, and whose grey hairs were about to be brought down in sorrow to the grave. It was June—genial, breezy, hope-breathing June;—yet the door of the cottage, usually so hospitably ajar, was closed against the sunshine; and, when Frank Welland entered, instead of the busy sounds of industry, formerly saluting him—Neighbor Gray croning some old ditty over her house-work, or as an accompaniment to the whir of the spinning-wheel—all was still as death. The old woman sat in her lonely arm-chair, with her back turned to the window, and her eyes fixed upon the embers, as if listening to a far off sound.

Reserved as Frank Welland was on most occasions, for once he waxed eloquent; to express to the distressed mother his hopes that she would command his utmost assistance, either pecuniary or personal, to administer to the service of

one who had proved so little worthy of the love they bore her. But Neighbor Gray listened and listened, and seemed to lack comprehension or courage to reply; for she uttered not a single syllable. At length, on some expression falling from Frank, that implied his apprehension of the worst, and his conviction of the guilt of the accused, she exclaimed—

"Why, sure, it is not you, Master Frank, who have known the girl from her cradle, who could believe her capable of taking away an innocent life?"

"It is hard, indeed, for *me* to think ill of Mary," replied young Welland, with quivering lips. "Mary was the dearest thing I had on earth. Mary might have been my wife before now, had she chosen to accept an honest man for her husband; but I am fain to fear, Neighbor Gray, from all I've just now been hearing, that things will go hard with her."

"Fear no such thing, Master Frank," replied the old woman with firmness. "If I sit grieving here, it is for the trouble into which my poor child has fallen, not for any danger that threatens her. To be sure, the law is a frightful thing; but, masterful as it is, it can't go to prove a thing as never happened upon the 'varsal 'arth. I have word from Mary, Master Frank, that, as sure as God is above us, she is innocent of the crime laid to her charge; and Mary's plain word is more to me than all the oaths ever sworn in a court of justice. From a babe to a woman, never did those lips of hers utter an untruth!"

An involuntary sob burst from Neighbor Gray as she offered this tender testimony to the virtues of her girl. Even Frank felt comforted by the assurance; and he had now courage to listen to the poor mother's details concerning the suspicions under which Mary had fallen, the investigations instituted by her master and mistress, and the evidence upon which she had been committed to take her trial for child-murder. The birth of an infant she admitted; yet not only refused to give up the name of the father, but persisted in swearing that it had been removed from Nottingham immediately after its birth, and was still in existence. Further than this, not a syllable could be extracted from the prisoner. Frank Welland's suspicions were now excited.

Connecting the visit of William Harding to Nottingham, the preceding summer, with the partiality he had betrayed for Mary on his visit to Falkstone, and her own subsequent coldness towards himself, Frank saw sufficient justification for addressing a letter to his young friend—not absolutely of accusation, but acquainting Harding with the actual situation of Mary Gray, and imploring him, if aware of any circumstance tending to establish her innocence, to bring it forward without delay. He mentioned that nothing but his uncle's dying state prevented his starting for Nottingham, to act a brother's part by the poor prisoner; and ended by a forcible appeal to the feelings of his friend.

"Think what would be Heaven's judgment on those who are really chargeable with the suspicions under which she labours," wrote young Welland, "if Mary Gray, at nineteen years of age, should be condemned to death for a crime of which she is as innocent as yourself. *To Death!—Think of that*, William! and do not fail to return an instant answer to my letter."

William Harding's reply was inconclusive and unsatisfactory; but agitation of mind was so perceptible in every line it contained, as fully to confirm the suspicions of Frank. He began by imploring Welland, if he valued his reputation and comfort in life, to refrain from addressing him again on the subject. "Next Tuesday is my wedding-day," said he; and should such a letter as I have just received from you fall into Sophy's hands, Heaven knows what might be the consequences. I am as willing as you can be to stand a friend to Neighbor Gray's daughter; and having been apprised of her unfortunate situation, have already given her the best law advice to be had for money. I have ascertained that she has nothing to fear. There is no evidence against her. She *must* be acquitted; and the only thing to be done for her future comfort, is to take a passage for her at once to America, as it will be impossible for her to live in peace at home, after what has happened. In the meantime, all I have to beg of you, my dear Welland, is to forbear all discussion of the subject till we meet again, when I shall explain matters to your satisfaction. Not a syllable more by letter!"

Frank Welland *did* refrain from further correspondence

with the friend he had detected as a villain; but not from the most zealous interference in behalf of Mary. At the risk of eternally offending his uncle, who had occasional glimpses of memory and consciousness, he resolved to set off for Nottingham; but, at the very moment of departure, old Welland experienced a second stroke of palsy, which, within twenty-four hours, terminated his existence; and scarcely had the old man breathed his last, when Frank, disdaining to inquire for a will or after the disposal of the property, left the dead to bury their dead, mounted his uncle's favourite mare, and rode off, like a madman, to Nottingham. The assizes had commenced the preceding day; the trial of Mary Gray was actually before the grand jury, when Frank Welland, half dead with emotion and exhaustion, entered the court. For the first time after nearly two years' absence, he beheld his gentle, sensitive Mary standing, wild and ghastly, at the bar, holding up her hand to plead for life, against the advocate of the laws of her country!—

But the opinion of the able counsellors procured by William Harding, was fully borne out. A deficiency of evidence secured the acquittal of the prisoner; and she was received from the bar, insensible, into the friendly arms of Francis Welland. *He*, indeed, entertained no further doubt of her innocence; but Mary did not leave the court with an unblemished reputation. She had not attempted to deny the birth of the child, but proved that she had confided the fact to others, so as to receive professional attendance; and, though her life was thus preserved from the retribution of the law, her character was gone forever.

"And what is to become of you, Mary?" demanded Frank, as he watched by her side, when at length she woke from the heavy slumber into which she had fallen, after being conducted by her devoted friend to an obscure inn at Nottingham, where he obtained her shelter for the night. "Shall you have courage to show your face at Falkstone? My uncle is lying dead at the farm. I must hasten back to do my duty by him. If you wish it, I will carry you home. It seems to me you have no alternative but to go back to your mother."

"I must wait his orders," replied the humbled girl, in a low voice.

"Whose orders must you wait?"

"My husband's!"

"Your husband's? you do not mean to pretend that you are married?"

"I am married," replied Mary, mildly. "And if I had not known yesterday that nothing could be proved against an innocent person, I might have set aside the trial at once, for I was indicted under my maiden name."

"And why, for God's sake, did you not put in the plea?"

"Because the discovery of our marriage would have been the ruin of my husband. Such has been throughout the motive of so much mystery. My little boy was taken away the moment he was born, and every means has been resorted to, to keep the secret. What have I not borne for it!—Disgrace, imprisonment, danger! and, above all, the wretchedness of knowing the sorrow I had brought down on my mother—on my poor, dear, kind, loving mother! Oh, Master Frank! I will not wait here any longer. Take me back to Falkstone! take me back to my mother! take me *home!*"

"In defiance of your *husband*, Mary?" sternly demanded Welland, who, in this softening of the poor girl's heart, felt he had an opportunity for the clearing up of his doubts.

"Why should I think more of *him* than he thinks of *me?*" cried Mary. "Why was he not, like yourself, in court, to give me courage and countenance! He promised to come down for the trial. He promised to be in readiness to receive me when all was over."

"To *come down!* from London perhaps?" demanded Frank, fixing his eye upon the countenance of the agitated girl. "Mary! it cannot, surely, be William Harding who has deceived you?"—

Mary turned paler than before, but uttered not a word.

"What is the alleged motive of this husband of yours," persisted Frank, "for so obstinate a concealment of his marriage?"

"That he would be instantly cast off by a relative from whom he has great expectations. What right have I to ruin his prospects in life? The moment he comes into his business, all is to be made known,—our boy acknowledged, and our marriage declared."

"Mary!" cried Frank Welland, "it is no longer possible for me to doubt that the villain who has all but brought you to a death of shame, is no other than William Harding. Do not deny it—do not attempt to deceive me or yourself. I tell you that, at this very moment, he is married to another. The business and fortune he was expecting, were the wedding portion of his cousin."

Mary smiled incredulously. "I am lawfully married—believe me, I am lawfully married!" was her sole reply.

"Not if your supposed husband be William Harding," persisted Frank, with solemn earnestness; and, taking from his pocket-book the letter announcing William's approaching marriage with Sophia, he placed this irrefragable proof in the hands of his companion. But Mary was no scholar. She begged him to read to her what he supposed to concern her of the epistle; and the horror-struck countenance with which she listened to every successive line, gradually unfolding the miseries of her fate and the worthlessness of him in whom she trusted, afforded eloquent confirmation of Welland's previous suspicions. She sat for some moments silent, after he had concluded the letter; then replied by producing for his inspection what she believed to be the legal certificate of a legal marriage, privately solemnized at Nottingham the preceding summer.

"He has deceived you, Mary," cried Frank, returning her the papers. "This is mere imposition—this is good for nothing. The marriage was a trick, an imposture."—

It was useless to add more. Mary, who had supported her courage so well at the bar of criminal justice, was now senseless at his feet.

A week elapsed—and Frank Welland had laid in the grave the venerable head of the relative by whose will he came into possession of property to the value of twelve thousand pounds; and a spectral figure sat by the fireside of Neighbor Gray, whose door was now closed more scrupulously than before against the consolatory visits of her village friends. Overwhelmed by the discovery of the infamous deception practised upon her, poor Mary refused to be comforted. One moment, she burst into invectives against her seducer, threatening to set off for London and bring his villanies to light; the next, she seemed to shrink from the

contemplation of the act of cruel justice she was about to inflict upon the worthless being so steadfastly beloved; and finding from young Welland that he was about to visit London to wind up his commercial affairs and dispose of his business, preparatory to retiring to Falkstone for the remainder of his days, she placed her cause in his hands, charging him to claim back from William Harding the pledge of now withered affection; and engage, on her part, to institute no proceedings against him, in consideration of his consenting to give her back the child.

Her commission was more than fulfilled by the young farmer. Armed with the sternness of righteous indignation, he proceeded to the house of feasting, over whose front the name of the happy bridegroom was now triumphantly inscribed in letters of gold; and having refused the hand extended towards him in friendly greeting by young Harding, repeated word by word, the adjurations of the unfortunate daughter of Neighbor Gray.

"Hush, hush! speak lower, I entreat you," said the delinquent, turning pale as death at the mere mention of Mary's name. "I can explain everything; I can——"

"You can explain *nothing!*" replied Welland, with firmness. "You have acted like a scoundrel, and your guilt will be only increased by denial. I know not how far your proceedings may have brought you within reach of the criminal justice of the country; but this I know, that, in spite of all your prosperity, all your pride, this thriving business of yours would fall away to nothing, were I to proclaim what you have done and what you have intended to do."

"Welland, my dear Welland!" faltered Harding, going anxiously to the door of the room in which they were standing, to ascertain that the listening ears of Gabriel Wilkinson were not on the watch. "For old friendship's sake, be merciful! Dictate your own terms—I am willing to do Mary Gray all the justice still in my power. I will make a comfortable settlement upon her and her mother."

"Neither her mother nor she would stoop to receive a shilling at your hands!" replied Frank, with contempt. "All this poor girl asks of you, is possession of her child."

"And that is the sole request beyond my power to grant,"

replied Harding. "The boy died within ten days of removal from his mother.—I can give you the certificate of his burial."

"*Another* forged certificate?" demanded Welland, with a scornful smile.

"No, on my honour!"

"Your *honour!*"

"On my word as a man and a Christian. Here it is," he continued, having unlocked and taken from his bureau a paper, which Welland recognized as in proper form. "Take it down to Mary. Set her mind at rest on that point. Make my peace with her, as far as peace is possible; and, whenever she will accept assistance at my hands, *you* shall dictate the settlement to be made upon her."

"*I shall*, but it will never proceed from funds of yours, replied Welland, impatiently. "There is but one concession I require of you—namely, a written engagement to attempt, on no future occasion, or on whatever pretext, any further communication with the family of Neighbor Gray."

"That is easily granted," replied Harding, readily taking up his pen to comply with the demand, in hopes that his compliance would rid him of the company of his dangerous visitor. "Here is my attestation, which you may sign as a witness, though I cannot exactly perceive what interest you have in such an agreement."

It was not to the culprit before him that Welland felt bound to enter into explanations. It was by the humble hearthside of Neighbor Gray that the young farmer unfolded for the first time, to the weeping Mary, his desire to make her his wife; a match that would not only secure her happiness for life, but, in a great measure, procure her vindication in the eyes of the world, and at the expense of his own character. Those who were aware of Frank Welland's inability to declare Mary his wife during the lifetime of his uncle, would attribute to *him* the evil that had befallen her, and the suspicions to which she had been on the point of falling a victim.

But, to the grief of Frank, and the amazement of Neighbor Gray, Mary was inexorable!—She was not going to carry shame, she said, into any honest man's homestead. Nor could even the utmost eloquence of Welland convince

her of the authenticity of the certificate he had brought from London. Mary felt how grievously she had been already misled by her want of scholarship; and, once deceived, could not bring herself to believe that the paltry slip of paper was anything more than a new feint to impose upon her. The mother—the young mother—was yearning in her heart. The first cry of her infant had sounded in her ears only to be silenced for ever; and, though now proved a child of shame, she felt that, if only permitted to fold her little son to her breast, all would be atoned—all might be forgotten:—her withered youth,—her blighted fame,—her broken heart. Even the fixed sadness of her mother's venerable countenance would be dispelled, after bestowing her benediction upon the precious child of her precious Mary.

Again and again—sometimes with entreaties, sometimes with chiding—did Welland labor to undeceive her. He resigned his own views, he forgot his own passion, while striving to restore the composure of the unhappy girl. But the more earnestly he protested, the more convinced was Mary that he was bent on persuading her of the death of the babe in order that, finding herself alone in the world, she might consent to become his wife, and resign all recollection of the past. She slept not by night, she rested not by day. Had it not been for the friendly aid of Farmer Welland, Neighbor Gray must have come to want; for the old woman was no longer able, nor her daughter willing to work. A spirit of restlessness, induced by her misfortunes, and almost amounting to insanity, seemed to have taken possession of poor Mary.

Unable to address a letter of appeal to her persecutor, and faithful to her resolution of confiding the secret so momentous to William's welfare to no other living soul, the devoted girl set about learning to write; and in the course of a few months, so far accomplished her object as to be able to frame a petition to Harding, embodying the requests already conveyed through the hands of Francis Welland. But, after all her patience, all her cares, all her labors, her letter was in a few days returned to her without a syllable of reply. Such was William Harding's mode of fulfilling the written engagement into which he had entered with his friend.

Two years had now elapsed since his marriage; and

though many men might have felt the evil to which his misdoings had given rise a drawback upon the happiness, nothing could exceed the triumphant pride of William Harding. Sophia had already made him the father of a boy, upon whom, at his birth, the grandfather settled a sum of 10. 000*l.*; and, to complete his satisfaction, Welland, the only individual in London cognizant of his guilt, had retired for life into a remote county. Harding was now a Common-Councilman, with a prospect of civic honors, pending which accession of importance he gratified his vanity by the re-adornment and extension of his premises in Cheapside. His shining, French-varnished mahogany counters, the large looking-glasses advantageously disposed for the reflection of light, the arabesque garlands adorning the pannels of the shop, the ormolu sconces, emitting long tongues of lucent gas—all were arranged according to the most approved form of modern luxury. Rich India shawls, and silks of Lyons manufacture, were disposed in folds and draperies, imparting to the place the air of a lady's bourdoir, rather than of a shop in Cheapside; while vases of enamelled Nankin porcelain, birds of Paradise, and pagodas of carved ivory or filigree, were interposed among his merceries, after the fashion of an India ware-house. Of this exhibition of taste and splendor, William Harding was vastly proud; and when the old gentleman drove in once or twice a week, from his villa at Camberwell, to dine with the young couple and admire the progress of his grandson, though he was apt to jeer and banter his successor upon his tendency to parade, he was, at heart, pleased to perceive that his son-in-law marched with the times, and had spirit to adventure further than himself. The business was daily rising in importance. Harding and Co. realised more in six months than John Harding alone, in twelve; nor could the old gentleman refrain from pointing out occasionally to Gabriel Wilkinson, as he passed through the shop, how many sources of profit had been neglected in his time, and how much of their present prosperity was owing to the sharp head and high character of his son-in-law. William would come to be church-warden of the parish,—William would come to be Alderman,—William *might* come to be Lord Mayor;—William would at all events, come into

possession of the sixty-five thousand pounds amassed by his father-in-law. Sophy was the happiest of wives—the boy a princely child:—had not old John Harding cause to applaud his choice of a son, and William the price he had set upon an unblemished reputation?

The only drawback on his satisfaction was some degree of incompatibility of temper with his flighty wife. Mrs. Harding, so far from possessing the gentleness and devotedness of his once idolized Mary, was a young woman of haughty spirit, educated at a third-rate boarding-school, in considerable admiration of her own heiress-ship. She knew the prosperity of her husband to emante solely from herself, and made use of the argument, on all occasions, to enforce her claims to consideration and indulgence. She was alike jealous of her husband's attention to his business in preference to herself, and jealous of her husband's influence over her father as superior to her own. She was often fretful, always imperious. But William felt that, for the present, it was desirable to bear all with submission. It was necessary, till the death of old Harding, to maintain, in the eyes of his father-in-law, the reputation of the best of husbands.

One day as the old gentleman was enjoying, in his daughter's drawing-room, the basin of smoking soup which William always took care to have in readiness for his visits, a sort of scuffle was heard at the door—an altercation between William and the nurse, who was for pushing into the room with the child. "I don't care, sir," reached the ears of Mrs. Harding and her father. "I know that woman will end with doing Master John a mischief. She shan't touch the child whilst he's in *my* care. I choose to go to my Missus——"

"Come in, nurse—come in!" cried Sophy, advancing towards the door; but the sovereign, silently slipped by William into nurse's hand, had produced a total confusion of ideas in the woman's mind. When interrogated by "Missus," she knew nothing—could remember nothing; and flattered herself she had succeeded in persuading the jealous woman that her ears had deceived her.

But Sophia was too shrewd to be so imposed on. She had always secretly resented William's coldness as a suitor

and indifference as a husband; and now so perseveringly addressed her questions to Gabriel Wilkinson, concerning the disturbance which had driven the nurse and child from the shop into the drawing-room, as at length to elicit that a young woman in deep mourning, having considerable remains of beauty, had more than once pursued the nurse and child into the house—claimed the boy as her own—upbraided William Harding, in presence of his shopmen and customers,—and only been driven at length from the place by threats of sending for peace-officers.

"The young woman is evidently out of her mind," observed Wilkinson, watching the effect of his communications. "But the tender way in which she appeals to her dear William, and the earnestness with which she insists upon getting possession of the little boy, are truly alarming; for, I fear, they have been already the means of raising reports in the neighbourhood disadvantageous to Mr. Harding. Twice, the vehemence of her outcries has attracted a mob round the shop-door; and I can perceive officious people, as they pass, pointing to the house as the scene of a mysterious occurrence."

"And have you not been able to discover the girl's name?" demanded Sophia, her heart fluttering with agitation.

"No, ma'am. It was no business of mine. But I think I have heard Mr. Harding address her as 'Mary.' I fancy it is some acquaintance from the country."

This hint was enough for the petulant Sophia. Much as she had before affected to despise the shop, she was now constantly visiting William at his counter, with his boy in her arms; nay, would even stand with him at the door, on pretence of amusing the child with the carriages passing by. Harding, meanwhile, was on thorns. Significant smiles passed between his envious shopmen, Wilkinson and Clark, when they saw their master, in his uneasiness, bringing down to his customers plush for velvet, or china crape for ærophane. But at length, Sophia's manœuvres succeeded; she obtained an interview with "Mary."

For it was indeed Mary Gray—Mary, carecrazed and friendless,—who, having paid the last duties to her mother and realized a small sum by the sale of her cottage and effects, had repaired to London on pretext of seeking a sit-

uation; but, in reality, on the frantic errand of persuading William Harding to give up her child. Her mind was more than ever bewildered by delusions; and, having readily found her way to the residence of the splendid mercer, she could not dispossess herself of the idea that the beautiful boy she saw laughing and crowing in his nurse's arms, in a shop inscribed with the name of "William Harding," could be no other than the one of whom she was in search.

"Give him to me!"—cried she, rushing into the shop on the memorable afternoon Sophia was lying in wait for her. "He is mine—he is my child!—William will tell you that he was married to me before he ever saw your face!—But I do not ask for William—I do not want William!—I want the child—I want our son—our boy!"

"Put her quietly out," said Harding in an under tone to Gabriel Wilkinson; "the poor creature is evidently mad." But the paleness overspreading his own features, and the faltering voice in which he spoke, bore testimony to his secret terrors.

"Do not hurt her—she seems quite harmless," cried Sophia, interfering, as Wilkinson was about to obey the directions of his master. "Do you want anything here, young woman?" she continued, addressing Mary Gray.

"I want my child!" replied Mary, more gently, on finding herself addressed in a tone of gentleness. "William Harding took it from me the moment it was born, promising I should have it again when he was able to acknowledge our marriage. And now, though you see how dearly he loves it, and how finely it is dressed, he keeps it from me on pretence that it is dead and buried!" And she attempted, with so much vehemence, to snatch the babe from the arms of its mother, that Sophia, terrified in her turn, was glad to escape into the interior of the house.

The rest of that day was anything but a day of peace to William. All that female exasperation could put forth in the way of reproach, was lavished upon him. He was accused by Sophy of having redeemed himself from beggary by a marriage with herself, to the ruin of some unhappy creature sacrificed to his interests; and already she had addressed a letter to her father, acquainting him with her discoveries, and imploring him to fetch her away from the city

the following day. Overwhelmed by the prospect of a breach with his father-in-law, Harding exerted himself to the utmost to "put the best face on the matter," taxing his wife with injustice in giving ear to the incoherences of one who was either a maniac or a person suborned to bring false accusations against an innocent man. By the time tea was nearly over, he had so far recovered his influence over the mind of the indignant Sophy as to be permitted to sit beside her on the sofa,and obtain a remote prospect of reconciliation.

But Mary Gray—who, though expelled with rough entreatment that morning from the threshold of her once loved William, felt that she had obtained an advantage in being permitted to approach the child whom her disordered intellects represented to her as her own—was still lurking near the shop ; and, when the business of the day was ended, and, by the light of the blazing gas gleaming through the transparent plate glass, she discerned Clark, Wilkinson, and their confraternity, busily engaged in making entries and folding up the rich cachemere and Ternau shawls, she made a sudden dart across the shop, towards the door through which she had seen Sophia disappear in the morning. In another moment, she was in the drawing-room ; confronting, with frantic gestures, the husband and wife, and interrupting their *tete-a-tete* with outcries for her child,—her boy.

"He is dead, Mary," cried William Harding, startled out of all self-possession by her sudden re-appearance. "You have seen the certificate of his burial. You well *know* that he is dead."

"Then you have murdered him. I accuse you of having murdered him !" exclaimed the poor girl, her face livid with excitement. "You tried hard to betray *me* to the gallows, in hopes of getting rid of me. I tell you, William Harding, you tried to make away with *me ;* and now you have made away with your poor, blessed, innocent, smiling babe. What have you done with it, madam ? where have you put it ?" cried she, making a wild rush towards the now shrieking Sophia, which was parried by the agitated husband ; and, as they were struggling together, the young men below, alarmed by the screams of Mrs. Harding, hurried up stairs. The window was thrown up, and the police called in. Ere they made their appearance, Mary, exhausted by her efforts,

and the disease by which they were excited, had fallen on the floor in a fit—her lips covered with foam, and her eyes starting from their orbits.

"Take her away, take her away!" shrieked Mrs. Harding, as the policemen entered; while her husband remained speechless with consternation.

"She is mad, I fancy," observed one of the shopmen, in explanation.

"More likely drunk," replied the policemen, to whom such incidents were familiar.

"Drunk and disorderly," added Clark, after representing to the policemen the strange intrusion of the offender, whom he proceeded to give in charge, with a view of putting an end to the dilemma of his employer.

"I warrant you a few hours in the station-house will bring the lady to herself," replied the man. And the still senseless Mary was accordingly borne off, conveyed to the station-house, and locked into a damp cell till morning. William Harding had no leisure for the consideration of her sufferings—Sophia's hysterics were quite as much, just then, as he could manage.

Two hours afterwards, just as the house was closed for the night, a knock was heard, followed by the voice of a stranger, insisting on an immediate interview with Mr. Harding. It was Welland; who, having followed the unfortunate daughter of Neighbor Gray to town, had only that afternoon traced out her lodgings, and, alarmed by her absence, and conjecturing whither the wanderings of the poor maniac had been directed, was come to demand tidings of the unhappy girl. William would, perhaps, have followed up his system of deception by denying all knowledge of her, had not the servants of the house already admitted to the visitor, that a young woman, out of her mind, had, in truth, been there; and, having bred disturbances in the family, was committed to the nearest police station.

Frank Welland did not waste a moment in appealing to the conscience of his former friend. Hastening eagerly to the station-house, by dint of a considerable bribe, he obtained immediate access to the prisoner.

"She be som'ere her'abouts. But the young woman war blind drunk, when shut in for the night," observed the con-

stable, lowering his lantern to the floor of the cell on which Mary Gray was lying. "She war obstropulous when we took her into custody; but she do seem quiet enough now."

And quiet enough she was, when Frank, with streaming eyes, bent over her body. Mary was dead!—Yes, dead,—still warm, but quite dead.

"There didn't seem no good in sending for a doctor," observed the policeman, in self-extenuation. "She war given in charge as drunk and disorderly. How was we to know as she war in a fit?"

"Given in charge?—by whom?" faltered Welland.

"By a respectable householder, Mr. William Harding, of Cheapside. There ben't a gemn'an of higher character in the parish."

The unfortunate daughter of Neighbor Gray was laid decently in the grave, by him over whose infancy the good woman had watched so kindly. But the prosperity, to the acquirement of which William Harding had sacrificed so largely, did not long outlast the sad event. The wrongs of poor Mary were avenged by the vindictive Sophia; who, till her father's death, remained his inmate, and, by her representations of the worthlessness of her husband, obtained the sole and separate control over the property left behind by old Harding.

No one pitied the delinquent—no one stood his friend. His gorgeous shop became deserted; and the failing business was, at length, made over, for a trifling consideration, to a new firm, Messrs Wilkinson and Clark. The ruined man, true to the last to his false principles, instead of attributing to his misdoings the failure of his worldly prosperity, bewailed only his loss of reputation.

"I had no chance of getting over such a stroke of ill-luck!"—was his constant exclamation. "Knowledge of business is a fine thing; but my case is a plain proof that, in trade, the one thing needful is CHARACTER!"

# THE JEWESS.

The vogue recently assigned by literary confederacy to the "Spas of Germany" and "Brunnens of Nassau" has been productive of numberless unforeseen results. Tunbridge Wells and Malvern are drooping; and more than one jolly citizen, accustomed aforetime to refresh himself with an autumnal trip to Ramsgate or Hastings, has extended his travels across the main, and died of sauerkraut and the spleen.

Fooling it among the rest, I arrived at Emmsbaden last year, the first week in September,—setting out on a journey just as the rains set in. Nothing could be more cheerless than the aspect of the little valley. The Lahn ran heavy in its channel, and time as heavy as the Lahn. Reasonable people had abandoned the place; and nothing remained but a *coterie* of discontented English, astonished to find that the green curtain had fallen, when they expected to be in time for the overture. It was perhaps owing to the want of better amusement, that one and all selected me as auditor of their several versions of an adventure which, towards the close of the season, had produced an unprecedented sensation in the place. In the course of the three days I remained at Emms, I continued to sum up the various editions of the story. But, in order to excite as strong an interest for the catastrophe as was expressed by my fair countrywoman (who, but for the timely incident, might have perished of *ennui*), it will be necessary to begin (like the *Belier*, in the fairy tale) with the beginning.

It was on the day succeeding Mr. Clifton's arrival in town, after a dreary winter in Ireland, that he was invited to a splendid *fete*, given by four rich and idle bachelors, at a villa on the banks of the Thames. Walter Clifton was a guest eminently worthy the entertainment.—Handsome, well-born, and accomplished, he had recently "come to his estate," which happened to lie in one of the disturbed dis-

tricts of the green island which seems bent upon eternally proving its greenness. His mother, a widow-lady of somewhat serious turn, resided in Dublin, where his youth and college vacations were chiefly passed; so that Clifton had none of the knowingness, nothing of the jargon, of a London man. There are certain branches of useless knowledge and phrases of fashionable slang, with which Eton, Harrow, or Westminster, renders the schoolboy as familiar as the most dowagerly of dowager dandies. But Walter's mind and conversation were pure from all this. He arrived in town a brilliant, animated, happy, sanguine creature; ready to be amused, willing to amuse; with truth on his lips and sunshine in his heart. When his Christ Church friend, Sir Robert Walmsley, offered him a ticket for the *fete*, he thought himself particularly lucky; and, much to the amazement of the dandy baronet, who from affectation could scarcely allow himself to inhale the common air breathed by the rest of mankind, candidly admitted his delight.

"I'm afraid you will be cursedly bored," was Sir Robert's apostrophe, on bestowing the ticket.

"I never was bored in my life," was Clifton's frank reply; "and should think it a reflection on myself, not to be gratified at Ashbrook Farm."

With feelings attuned to enjoyment, therefore, he turned his cabriolet into the Fulham road, as the bright midsummer morning subsided into a delicious afternoon; and when, from a distance, he caught the sound of the military band enlivening the *fete*, his light heart felt lighter than ever, and he quickened his horse's speed towards the gates. As it usually happens where superfluous precautions are taken to secure the order of the day, disorder ensued. Such a superabundance of policeman were stationed in the vicinity of the spot to protect the plate and other valuable property contributed by the lordly *fete*-givers, that, having nothing else to do, they did mischief,—hectored the footmen in attendance, and set the coachmen squabbling with each other and slashing their horses. A London coachman is an animal peculiarly insubordinate to constituted athorities. There was one white-wigged, red-faced, irascible old gentleman, proceeding to the Ashbrook *fete*, who, on being reproved for impatience (which was in fact the impatience of a pair of spirited blood horses,) whipped out of the line,

produced a considerable smashing of panels, and eventually arrived at the gate with a policeman at each of his horses' heads;—his brother whips cheering him on, the rabble shouting and swearing,—the policemen looking wondrous blue, and the two ladies in the handsome chariot he was driving, as pale as ashes.

The latter circumstance naturally excited the sympathy of Walter Clifton. He was out of his cab in a moment; offering his aid to hasten them out of the carriage, now surrounded by a noisy, struggling multitude, among which the gentry in office were indiscriminately dealing their blows. To escort them through the throng, was the work of a moment; but it was not till they had arrived at an inner entrance, where shawls were deposited and tickets given, he had leisure to note that the elder of the two ladies was attired with unusual costliness, and the younger scarcely less lavishly adorned with the gifts of nature. Both were warmely welcomed by the hospitable heroes of the day, with whom Clifton was unacquainted; and though his unknown friends turned towards him with eager acknowledgments, he had the mortification of being without the means of a formal introduction. It *was* a mortification; for the dark-haired girl who smiled upon him while her chaperon was pouring out her thanks, was one of the handsomest creatures that he had ever beheld; with dark oriental eyes, the most graceful form, the most buoyant demeanor!—His sense of propriety scarcely sufficed to remind him that, till he had been introduced in form, there would be want of delicacy in presuming upon an acquaintance thus accidentally formed; and it was with some difficulty he tore himself from the contemplation of that fine intelligent countenance, to go in search of a master of the ceremonies.

"My dear Walmsley," cried he, the moment he caught a glimpse of Sir Robert, "can you tell me who it is that drives a very dark chariot with bay horses?"

"Everybody drives a dark chariot with bay horses," drawled the dandy, trying to pass on.

"With white liveries?"

"My dear fellow, I know nobody I never notice liveries."

"But you surely notice beautiful faces; and——"

"I like beautiful faces to notice *me*. But pray excuse me. The duchess is waiting for me to take her in to breakfast."

Equally unsuccessful were divers other applications Nobody listened—nobody cared—nobody knew anything about anybody. It is probable, however that the objects of his inquiry succeeded on *their* part in ascertaining *his* name and condition; for as he stood overlooking a quadrille, in which one or two of his friends were engaged, the elder lady, approaching with her fair companion on her arm, addressing him with so much graciousness, that in the flurry of spirits excited by the animating scene, and almost before he knew what he was about, he engaged the beauty as a partner for the following dance.

All now went smoothly—more smoothly than his rashness deserved. They stood together,—danced together,—talked together,—smiled together. Clifton readily discovered that his companion was a person moving in the best society, and commanding its courtesies; and, with characteristic frankness, made her acquainted with his whole history in return. Having loitered a few minutes near his fair partner, after returning her to the protection of her chaperon, he discovered that they were mother and daughter, and that the name of the latter was Rachel;—a homely designation, but when people are in the humor to be pleased, nothing come amiss. To remain long by her side, however, was impossible. The ladies were too popular to be accessible to his assiduities. Rachel was beset with partners, and Rachel's mamma by half the fashionable dowagers of the day.

Meanwhile, the *fete* proceeded with unprecedent brilliancy. It was a delicious day, and the lovely lawns of Ashford Farm were worthy of the weather. Every impression received by Clifton was agreeable, and tended to increase his hilarity. Never had he passed so enchanting a morning; and by the time that evening brought the *fete* to a close, and amid the crackling and sputtering of fireworks, his cousin, Lady Armagh, presented him in form to the ladies of the dark chariot and bay horses, as—"Mrs. De Bruyn, Mr. Clifton—Mr. Clifton, Mrs. and Miss De Bruyn," he had ceased to care about the ceremony. Accident had brought them together, and inclination kept them together nearly the whole of the day. They were already intimate.

At the opera the following night, nothing was so easy as

for Mr. Clifton to visit Mrs. De Bruyn's box; at the Zoological next day, nothing so charming as to walk by Rachel's side. Finding that they were to be at Almack's and all the best balls of the ensuing week, he took measures for meeting them; and though they were on all occasions surrounded by the most fashionable men in town, Miss De Bruyn usually managed to make room for his approach. She evidently preferred his society. While he worshipped her beauty, Rachel evidently delighted in his frank, cordial character.

Amid the tittle-tattle of second-rate society, Walter Clifton would not have been a week acquainted with the De Bruyns, without learning every particular of their birth, parentage, and education—the name of Mrs. De B.'s great-grand-mother, and the amount of the value of her diamonds. But among those with whom they mutually associated, everybody is supposed to know everybody; because all are persons concerning whom everything is known. In process of time, Mrs. De Bruyn invited Walter to her house in Berkely square; where he was presented to a Mr. John De Bruyn, a young man whom he took to be the son and brother of his friends. By the whole family, he was cordially welcomed. He found them living in opulence. His beautiful Rachel displayed every accomplishment of a first-rate education; and he felt himself fortunate in having accidentally made his way into a domestic circle, which he was beginning to flatter himself might eventually become his own. With the exception of certain harsh peculiarities of manner on the part of the mother, there was nothing he could wish altered in the family.

A man less ingenuous than Walter Clifton, might in fact have been easily captivated by the attractions of such a girl as Rachel. There was a nobleness and high-mindedness in her sentiments, peculiarly consonant with the lofty beauty of her person. Of all the women he had ever heard converse, not one approached her in unstudied eloquence, information, in correctness of taste and judgment. He could no longer bear to talk with other girls. It was not alone the liquid lustre of her dark eyes,—the speaking expression of her finely-formed mouth, which thrilled through his soul when he gazed upon her intelligent face. It was that he believed in her preference; that she conversed with

him far more unreservedly than with any other man of her acquaintance; and he only trembled least he might injure his cause by precipitancy, so difficult was it to restrain himself from declaring in form to Mrs. De Bruyn his desire to be admitted as a suitor to her daughter. He felt that six weeks' acquaintance could not justify such a pretension; and contented himself with writing to his Irish man of business for a formal statement of the nature and condition of his property, that he might be prepared to meet the inquiries likely to arise on his proposals.

Such was the happy state of Clifton's feelings while daily engaged in escorting the lady of his thoughts to exhibitions, picnics, water-parties, breakfasts, reviews; dancing with her at every ball, and sitting entranced by her side at every opera. No objection was formed to his attentions. John De Bruyn, a dull, sullen young man, was in constant attendance on his sister, and on excellent terms with her admirer; and though their conversation was usually carried on in whispers, the slightest word of which from Rachel's lips reached the inmost recesses of the heart of Clifton, neither mother, nor brother, nor any one present, could be unobservant of their increasing intimacy.

One morning, the young lover, calling at an earlier hour than usual in Berkeley square, and finding Mrs. De Bruyn alone, naturally inquired for her daughter.

"Rachel is gone to sit for her picture," was the reply.

"Her picture! to whom? Who, *who* will do her justice?" cried Clifton, eagerly.

"Drummond, I hope. The sketch promises extremely well. John saw it yesterday, and was delighted."

"The picture is intended then for a present to Mr. De Bruyn?" observed Walter.

No, it is for myself. I shall want it as a remembrance when she is gone. Rachel will leave it with me on her marriage."

Clifton coloured deeply. The allusion appeared too explicit to be mistaken; and he was beginning to inquire of himself whether it might not be intended as a spur to his tardy explanations, when Mrs. De Bruyn calmly added, "Rachel's Marriage takes place, you know, in August."

"Her marriage?"—

"I trust John has given you an invitation in form?"

Walter Clifton trembled from head to foot, as he inquired, with assumed composure, what happy man Miss De Bruyn was about to honour with her hand. The mother regarded him with unfeigned surprise.

"It is surely impossible you can be unaware," said she, "that Rachel is about to marry her cousin John? The terms of the late Mr. De Bruyn's will (thanks to the officiousness of the newspapers) were made so very public, that I fancied all the world acquainted with my daughter's engagement, which has existed from her birth. It was, in fact, the only method by which poor Mr. De Bruyn could concentrate the affairs of his house. John will henceforward assume the sole control of the business. Among families of our persuasion, such alliances are common."

"*Persuasion? business?*" Yes! Walter Clifton began to understand it all! Rachel was doubtless the daughter of the great Jewish banker De Bruyn, defunct a few years before, the details of whose will had occupied three columns per day of the morning papers for nearly a week. He ought to have remembered all this—he ought to have inquired—he ought to have known, or rather, people ought to have warned him! Yet why, or wherefore? Was it not tacitly understood that all London, from the Regent's Park to St. James's, was familiar with the fortunes of the great heiress, the only daughter of the most eminent of Jewish bankers?

Luckily for Walter, the announcement of a visitor at that moment afforded him an opportunity of escape from the house; and his horse being in waiting at the door, he galloped many miles into the country, before the stunning effects of the blow he had received in the slightest degree subsided.

His first impulse was to quit London that very night; *not* for Ireland,—for only the preceding day he had dispatched a letter to his mother explanatory of his happy expectations, and he had not courage to expose himself to the old lady's questions and condolences. No! he would go abroad—to Turkey—Egypt—the East; no matter where, so that he might escape all recurrence to the origin of his wretchedness! On Rachel De Bruyn he never wished to look again. One of the weaknesses of his moral nature was an antipathy to Jews and all relating to them; and even

were the prejudice surmounted, this member of the tribe—this one—*this Jewess*—had done him a deliberate injury—had triumphed, for her wanton amusement, over his affections. No! he never wished to look on Rachel De Bruyn again!

On his return towards London, however, calmer feelings ensued. Though still determined to fly from England, he resolved, ere his departure, to indulge in a last view of that which was so eminently lovely, as if for the purpose of engraving still more indelibly in his bosom, the image of its false idol. He could trust himself to look upon her without self-betrayal. He possessed an all potent antidote to the power of her charms—to the magic of her voice. *She was a Jewess!*

According to previous engagement, they were to meet and dance together that evening, at one of the finest *fetes* of the season. He would go—he would confront her,—he would fix his eyes for the last time upon the future Mrs. John De Bruyn.

From the smiling self-possession with which she accosted him, Clifton inferred with truth that his emotion of the morning had passed unnoticed by her mother. No suspicions were excited. They might part as calmly as they had met. Rachel should never know the anguish she had inflicted;—never learn that he had quitted her with a breaking heart to bid an eternal farewell to the country wherein she abided. He began, therefore, to talk with indifference on indifferent subjects; and unsuspicious that any peculiar agitation was labouring in his breast, the lovely girl readily accepted his arm, to make the tour of the illuminated gardens of —— House. At length, they sat down together, still talking with levity and smiling with unconcern; till, after gazing in silence a moment or two upon the beautiful contour of her half-averted face, Clifton suddenly gave way to an uncontrolled burst of passionate exclamation. "No! it cannot have proceeded from inadvertence!" cried he. "You *must* have been aware of the cruel injury you were inflicting!—you *must* have seen how blindly I fell into an error, the results of which are to cleave to me as a curse forevermore!"

Believing her companion to be attacked by sudden frenzy, Rachel started up, and proposed returning to her mother. But Clifton did not stir, and the tears now slowly rolling down his face appealed so forcibly to her sympathy, that, without uttering a syllable, she sat down again by his side.

"You cannot have been insensible to your influence over me," he resumed, in a broken voice; "and knowing the insuperable obstacles between us, why—why encourage my attachment for the wanton indulgence of a vanity which has withered every prospect of my life!"——

"Obstacles? attachment?" exclaimed Rachel, in grief and surprise, overpowered by the fervour of his address. "Dear Mr. Clifton, with what have you to reproach me? From the moment of your considerate kindness to us at Ashbrook, you have been welcomed with warm friendship to our house. You must have seen how much we preferred your society—how truly flattered we were by your preference of ours."

"Then why not explain at once the impossibility of the expectations I was forming?"

"Expectations?"

"Of making you my wife—my own—my beloved and loving household companion!"

Rachel grew pale as she listened to this earnest apostrophe.

"You cannot have meditated this," said she, at length, in a tremulous voice. "The difference of religion——"

"I knew it not—I guessed it not!"

"Yet our name—our well known connections——"

"I saw nothing but your beauty—your excellence. I asked nothing—I cared for nothing—but to be near you, still and ever near you—near you as now, when, gazing for the last time upon your face, I feel that my earthly happiness is crushed forever. Rachel! you *must* have seen that I loved you!"—

"You did but offer me, in a more marked degree, the attention I have been in the habit of receiving from others; who, aware of my faith, my family, my betrothment to my cousin, show me the attention due to my age, sex, and position in society."

And has there been nothing then in your own feelings towards me, to war against your happiness in the state into which you are now about to enter?—You have a colder heart than I imagined!"—cried Walter Clifton.

"My cousin is no less partial to you than my mother and myself. I have always hoped our friendship would continue after my marriage," pleaded Miss De Bruyn, accustom-

ed from childhood to regard the tie of wedlock as part of the ceremony of social life.

"Your cousin!"—exclaimed Clifton. "Did you imagine that your *husband* would remain equally insensible to my passionate idolatry?"

"I never thought—I never considered. I have lived with John De Bruyn on the happiest terms so long as I can remember," faltered Rachal. "Why should he begin to thwart me, and interfere with my preferences, on the eternal union of our destinies?"

"Rachel, Rachel!—you will drive me mad!"—cried Clifton, perceiving how closely enfolded was her soul in the web of early associations and religious influence. "What is the meaning of this strange combination of simplicity and intelligence, of feeling and insensibility? Are you about to bestow yourself as a mere endowment—to give up your youth, your beauty, to one you regard only as a partner in your father's bank? Or do you—(tell me truly, I can bear it, Rachel, answer me for once honestly) *do* you—*can* you love this man?"—

"Of course I do! My cousin has never breathed a harsh word to me, or been guilty of an unkind action."

"But is that enough for the intimate—the exquisite tenderness of wedded life?—Is it to *his* eyes your own can turn in unspeakable sympathy with all that is bright, noble, and glorious?—Is it from *him* you will seek encouragement in your aspirations after knowledge—after truth? Is it towards him you will be conscious of that intense and fervent passion, which finds eternity itself insufficient for its prospects of happiness?"

Miss De Bruyn had no reply for language so new, so alarming. It was not thus she had been accustomed to contemplate her union with her impassive cousin. It was a family arrangement, immutable as that which made her the child of her mother, or the daughter of her tribe; but it was nothing more.

"I must not listen to all this," said she, becoming conscious of the delicacy of her situation, and making a movement to rise.

"You will not have to listen to it long!"—was Clifton's calm rejoinder, resuming some control over his feelings. "I am here but to bid you farewell for ever. After this

night, I shall behold your face no more. Be happy, Rachel, since you can content yourself with the monotonous calm of an existence unbrightened by tenderness,—unendeared by the ties of spontaneous, fervent, passionate attachment!"—

"But you are a Christian!"—interrupted Miss De Bruyn. "Even had not my destiny been sealed by an eternal compact, I never could have become your wife."

It was now Walter's turn to remain silent; and Rachel mildly pursued her advantage.

"If, as you say," continued she, in a faltering tone, "I am to blame in not having discovered your attachment, and apprised you of the obstacles to our union, why did not *you*, who were satisfied of my affection, acquaint *me* with the objections that were to prevent my being honored with your hand?"

"On my life—my soul—I knew not of their existence!" cried Walter. "What was there in your position in the world, or your establishment at home, to induce suspicion that you were otherwise than the society in which I found you? But even had I known it," cried he, struggling with contending emotions, "nay, deeply as I am imbued by birth and education with prejudices against your faith and its professors, I would have waived all objections—forgotten all scruples—for the rich compensation of calling you mine for ever!"

Rachel was silent. A deep impression had been made upon her feelings.

"By my father's will," said she at last in a low voice, "I forfeit my whole fortune by non-fulfilment of my contract with my cousin."

"Are you then so dearly attached to the things of this world?"—exclaimed Clifton, with bitter contempt.

"As little as any human being," replied Rachel, unmoved by his sarcasm. "But how do I know that others that *you*—might be equally indifferent?"

"Great God! are your so little acquainted with human nature as to suppose that the man who would sacrifice the deepest prejudices of his soul for your sake, would not also resign the paltry temptation of a little miserable dross?"—

Again Rachel was silent. But this time, the impression upon her feelings was trebly profound.

"You would make me your wife then,—poor penniless —rejected by my family—abhorred by my people——"

Clifton's reply burst forth at once from the impetuosity of a generous heart.

"You are excited by the passion of the moment," said Rachel, a bright expression of new-born love and happiness beaming from her eyes. "Think calmly of it, Clifton!—I give you till to-morrow for consideration."

"You mean that *you* desire to deliberate on such a sacrifice!"

"No—my mind is decided. Such love as this can be but once the portion of any living woman. If to-morrow your reply be affirmative, I am your wife!"

On the morrow, the reply *was* affirmative; and on the following day Rachel De Bruyn summoned together her family and apprised them of her resolution not only to break faith with her cousin, but to become the wife of a Christian! The consternation, the indignation, the persecution provoked by such a declaration may be readily conjectured. The elders of the family denounced her; her spiritual counsellors were called in. In reply to the interrogations of the high priest, she admitted not only her sacrilegious intentions, but that she had made no conditions with Clifton for the retention of her religious observances. She had perfect faith in his generosity.

"If you intended to inspire me with the horror you now manifest towards the professors of the Christian faith," was her consistent reply to the furious invectives of her mother, "you should not have exposed me to the attraction of their society. I have lived chiefly among Christians. It is *there* I have been happiest—it is *there* I am determined to be happy!"

It was vain, meanwhile, to urge upon her as an argument against her resolution, the misery she was inflicting upon her cousin; for though Mrs. De Bruyn was almost frantic at the prospect of her daughter's loss of fortune, John was evidently consoled by its forfeiture to himself for the loss of his cousin. Impossible to show greater resignation. Two months, however, were to elapse previous to Rachel's attainment of her majority and acquirement of the power of election; and Mrs. De Bruyn flattered herself that the interval, judiciously improved, might wean her daughter from a preference which *she* called madness, her nephew folly,

and the synagogue sin. Without giving time for a renewal of intercourse with Clifton, she embarked that very evening for Rotterdam, accompanied by a venerable Rabbi, who for years had presided over the family conscience of the De Bruyns; and on being rejoined by her establishment, proceeded at once on a tour of the Rhine.

Closely as Rachel was watched by her mother, she was too much beloved by those around her not to obtain the means of communicating to Clifton the disastrous results of the step she had taken; and by the time the party reached Nassau, Walter was on his way to her assistance.

"You can scarcely believe," said the lively Frenchwoman, by whom the anecdote was first related to me, "the sensation produced at Emms by the arrival of Mademoselle De Bruyn. It was neither her beauty, her grace, nor the reputation of her enormous fortune, which captivated our attention; though never, I must confess, did I behold so perfectly lovely a creature! It was rather the sensibility of her countenance—the restlessness of her anxious looks—the irritating manner in which, though grown to womanhood, she was domineered over by her mother. Nothing could be more gentle than her demeanor—more reasonable than her conversation, so that we discerned no pretext for so much coercion. The mamma and Mr. Steinkerpf examined every step she took, and every word that fell from her lips; and as all the world supposed that the heiress was on the point of marriage with her father's nephew, where was the use of maintaining her in such childish subordination?

"At length, one evening, late in the month of August, as Prince Soltikoff, who was always mineralizing or botanizalong the cliffs, was returning in the dusk by the copses of of the Nassau road, he perceived an English lady and gentleman walking side by side in earnest conversation. The young man, who was tall and strikingly handsome, was a stranger to him—the lady was Miss De Bruyn. Though the Prince coughed repeatedly to apprize them of his approach, they appeared indifferent to his presence. Rachel was conversing in a low tone, broken by sobs—her companion addressing her with impassioned eloquence. All that Soltikoff's knowledge of the language permitted him to overhear was, when within sight of the kindling lights of the Baths, Miss De Bruyn gave her hand to the stranger, and

uttered the words, "To-morrow, at midnight." They proceeded onwards in different directions. It is probable, however, that their rendezvous had not escaped detection, for the prince noticed a tall figure stealing along the cliffs."

"The prince at least," said I, "had the gallantry to preserve the young lady's secret?"

"He had no opportunity for indiscretion. The following morning, we were all roused at day-break, with intelligence that Miss De Bruyn had disappeared."

"In company with the young Englishman?"

"By no means. No sooner was a search instituted by the mother, than Mr. Clifton came forward in frantic dismay, acknowledged their meeting of the preceeding evening, and their appointment for the night ensuing, preparatory to an elopement. Like Soltikoff, he had seen Rachel approach the village, and seen her no more. It was clearly proved that she never re-entered the hotel." "And her mother?"

"Mrs. De Bruyn was distracted—offered enormous rewards for intelligence,—caused the neighborhood to be searched,—the river examined; and, after ten days of fruitless investigation, with all the aid the local tribunals of the Grand Duchy could render, quitted the spot in despair."

"Either Walter Clifton was more persevering, or a conconfederate in her disappearance," said I, after some cogitation.

"Neither the one nor the other. *There* lies the grand mystery of the case. Mrs. De Bruyn's despair was scarcely more evident than that of the unfortunate young man. Clifton is now in confinement at Frankfort, under the care of the British resident, till a proper person arrives from England to convey him home to his family. It was indispensable to place him under restraint. He made two attempts upon his life. He could not be left at large. All Emms was in commotion."

"And has nothing further transpired concerning the victim? Is it still supposed that she was assassinated?"

"No one has the slightest grounds for conjecture. Madame De Bruyn, we are told, has put her family into mourning."

"Surely that was premature? Had poor Rachel been unfairly dealt with, some trace of the horrible event must have appeared. I have it strongly on my mind that she is still living."

"Perhaps so," rejoined the lady, coolly tapping her snuff-box. "But in that case—*what has become of her?*"

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